SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 1223 03273 7653

DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE

PART OF THE CITYWIDE ACTION PLAN

THE RINCON HILL PLAN

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION

D
REF
711.4097
R471dp

5/S

San Francisco Public Library

Government Information Center
San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin Street, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

REFERENCE BOOK

Not to be taken from the Library

The Rincon Hill Plan

Draft For Public Discussion

The Rincon Hill Neighborhood

3 1223 03273 7653

Table of Contents

I. Introduction 1
- Where is Rincon Hill? 2
- Why a New Plan for Rincon Hill? 3
- The Planning Framework 6
  - The Citywide Action Plan 6
  - The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative 8

II. Neighborhood Vision 12
- Goals and Intent 14
- Neighborhood Vision 16

III. Plan Elements 18
- Land Use 20
- Urban Form 28
- Neighborhood Design 47
- Public Realm 56
- Preservation 66

IV. Implementation 68
- Financing the Costs of Creating a Full-Service Neighborhood 70

V. Appendices 74
- Transit First Policy (City Charter) 76
- Impact of New Development on Services and Infrastructure 77
- New Facilities Costs 78
- Planning and Impact Fees in California Cities 80

Acknowledgements and Contacts 82

I Introduction

Where is Rincon Hill? | Why a New Plan for Rincon Hill? | The Planning Framework

This section of the plan discusses Rincon Hill's strategic location and opportunities as well as the reasons for undertaking a new plan for this district. Included is a description of current plans for the neighboring Transbay district, which inform and are informed by the ideas for Rincon Hill. This current planning effort for Rincon Hill is set within the context of a larger comprehensive planning effort, the Citywide Action Plan, currently underway in San Francisco, and one of its components, the Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative.

Where is Rincon Hill?

Rincon Hill is in northeast San Francisco, south of the Financial District and Transbay, and north of the South Beach neighborhood. It is bounded generally by Folsom Street, Steuart Street, The Embarcadero, Bryant Street, and the Bay Bridge approach and the Transbay Terminal ramps. It is within an easy walk of Downtown, the Transbay Terminal, and Pac Bell Park.

The area is defined by the hill itself, which crests near First and Harrison Streets; the Bay Bridge, which cuts the district between Harrison and Bryant; and the waterfront, which curves around the base of the hill. It is a mix of residential, warehousing, and office uses.

The 55 acres of land in Rincon Hill is subdivided into over 70 parcels, and consists of portions of Assessor's Blocks 3749, 3764, 3765, 3766 and all of Assessor's Blocks 3744, 3745, 3746, 3747, 3748, 3767, 3768, and 3769.

Why a New Plan for Rincon Hill?

The Planning Department is proposing a new plan and controls for Rincon Hill. In accordance with San Francisco's *General Plan*, the department aims to transform presently non-residential areas adjacent to downtown into dynamic mixed-use neighborhoods. These new neighborhoods, with Rincon Hill and Transbay as two major components, will contribute significantly to the city's housing supply and will provide a full range of services and amenities to a growing downtown residential population living in a full-service urban place. The Rincon Hill Plan is part of the comprehensive planning effort for the larger downtown area embodied in the "Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative", summarized below. The new planning controls for Rincon Hill are intended to ensure the creation of a high-density residential neighborhood that balances livability and density, preserves sunlight and air, has attractive and livable streets and open spaces, offers a variety of housing types, allows easy access to shops and services, and generally enhances the area's role as a vital new part of the city.

To implement this vision for Rincon Hill, the Planning Department proposes to replace the Planning Code's Rincon Hill Special Use District (Planning Code Section 249.1) with a new Rincon Hill Downtown Residential Mixed Use District ("Rincon Hill DTR"), revise height and bulk controls, amend the Rincon Hill Area Plan of the *General Plan*, and make other changes as necessary.

These changes are important and timely for a number of reasons:

- The city is facing an urgent need for housing. While Rincon Hill represents a prime location for new high-density housing in a walkable and transit-friendly setting, existing planning controls have not suceeded in encouraging substantial new housing in the area. While several thousand new homes were anticipated when the existing controls were created, only a few hundred have been built.

- With the removal of the Embarcadero Freeway and the proposal for a new Transbay Terminal, there is the opportunity to plan comprehensively for Transbay and Rincon Hill. Ultimately, Rincon Hill and Transbay will be one neighborhood built around a new Folsom Boulevard. There is the opportunity to reshape the city skyline and establish a new, more livable model for high-density living in San Francisco, with Rincon Hill and Transbay working in tandem.

- The overall quality and character of new development in the area can be dramatically improved, especially in how buildings meet the street. By raising the bar on new development, we can ensure that new buildings contribute to an active, interesting neighborhood at street level, and that adequate light, air and views are preserved in the district.

The Rincon Hill area remains dominated by wide, unimproved streets that, while heavily-trafficked at rush hour, are otherwise underused. A scattering of new residential developments are not served by the parks, shops and services necessary to support urban living.

Recent development has contributed little to the transformation of streets and the pedestrian environment, with multiple levels of above-ground parking, and garage entries and featureless walls facing the street.

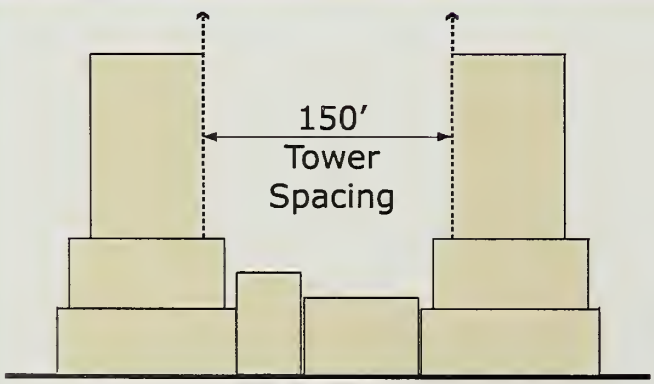
Issues With the Current Rincon Hill Zoning

The Rincon Hill Area Plan was adopted in 1985 to help the district transition into a residential neighborhood. It called for a high-density residential district with a commercial and industrial buffer between this new residential district, the bridge and its ramps, and what was then the Embarcadero Freeway. The plan also highlighted the importance of views in the area, on-site public open space, street improvements, sidewalk widenings, the character of street-fronting uses, the creation of through-block pathways, and the preservation of historic resources.

To implement the Area Plan, a Rincon Hill Special Use District ("SUD") was adopted by the Planning Commission. This SUD created a large pocket of residential zoning at the core of the district, increased heights up to 250 feet in some locations, and introduced strict controls on tower spacing and building bulk.

While several new residential buildings have been built under the SUD, these controls have proven difficult to implement and have failed to achieve the key elements of the Area Plan. Lacking a clear vision for the district's overall improvement, its character remains industrial, with wide, heavily trafficked streets. The district still lacks basic amenities for residential living— safe and walkable streets and crossings, open spaces, and shops and services to service a growing population.

With the removal of the Embacadero Freeway and planning for the tranformation of Transbay, now is the time to revisit the controls for Rincon Hill to ensure that new development is of unparalleled quality— helping to not only create substantial new housing, but also to transform the district into a full-service neighborhood.



Existing Controls

The existing controls for Rincon Hill call for slender towers up to 250 feet in height, spaced at least 150 feet apart.

As Built

Under existing zoning, projects regularly use exceptions to construct bulkier buildings closer together than is otherwise allowed, blocking views, crowding streets, and creating a flat, unappealing skyline.

The Eight Elements of a Good Neighborhood

The Planning Department recently led the Better Neighborhoods community planning process in three very different neighborhoods: Market and Octavia, Balboa Park, and the Central Waterfront. Through dialogues with residents about the qualities of a good urban neighborhood, eight elements rose to the top as essential to creating great places. This list of eight elements, below, should be a reference point in planning to create a dynamic mixed use residential neighborhood in Rincon Hill:

Walk to Shops

A great neighborhood has stores and shops that satisfy everyday needs within an easy walk from home. Everyday shops and services include corner groceries, day care, cafes and restaurants, banks, dry cleaners, bakeries, and the like. An easy walk is about five to ten minutes.

Safe Streets

A great neighborhood has safe and friendly streets. In a great neighborhood people can walk without fear of crime, being threatened by traffic, or being disturbed by excessive noise. People feel like they "belong" on neighborhood streets. Residential streets feel public, and more like open space than trafficways. Streets are a pleasant part of the neighborhood.

Getting Around Easily

A great neighborhood has many choices for moving to, from, and within it. Great neighborhoods find it easy to move about on foot, by bicycle, transit, and auto. They accommodate the car, but allow people to live easily without one.

Housing Choices

A great neighborhood has a variety of housing types. A mix of houses, flats, and apartments of various sizes meet different needs and preferences.

Gathering Places

A great neighborhood has places for people to meet, talk, and be neighborly. Public gathering places include parks, plazas, sidewalks, and shops.

City Services

A great neighborhood has a full range of public services for residents. Public services include parks, schools, police and fire stations, libraries, and other amenities.

Special Character

A great neighborhood has its own special character. All neighborhoods are shaped by their physical setting, streets, buildings, open spaces, history, culture and the people who live in them. In great neighborhoods these attributes combine in unique and memorable ways.

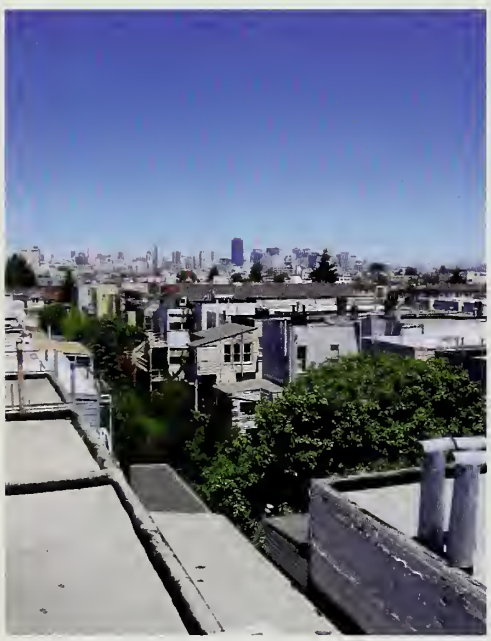
Part of the Whole

Great neighborhoods make great cities. Great neighborhoods stand out on their own, yet are connected to the city. They can be a refuge for their residents, but also an integral part of the city's wider community.

The Planning Framework

The Rincon Hill Plan lies within a larger framework of planning called the Citywide Action Plan (CAP). One of the components of the CAP is the Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative, of which Rincon Hill is one planning area. Each is summarized below.

The Citywide Action Plan



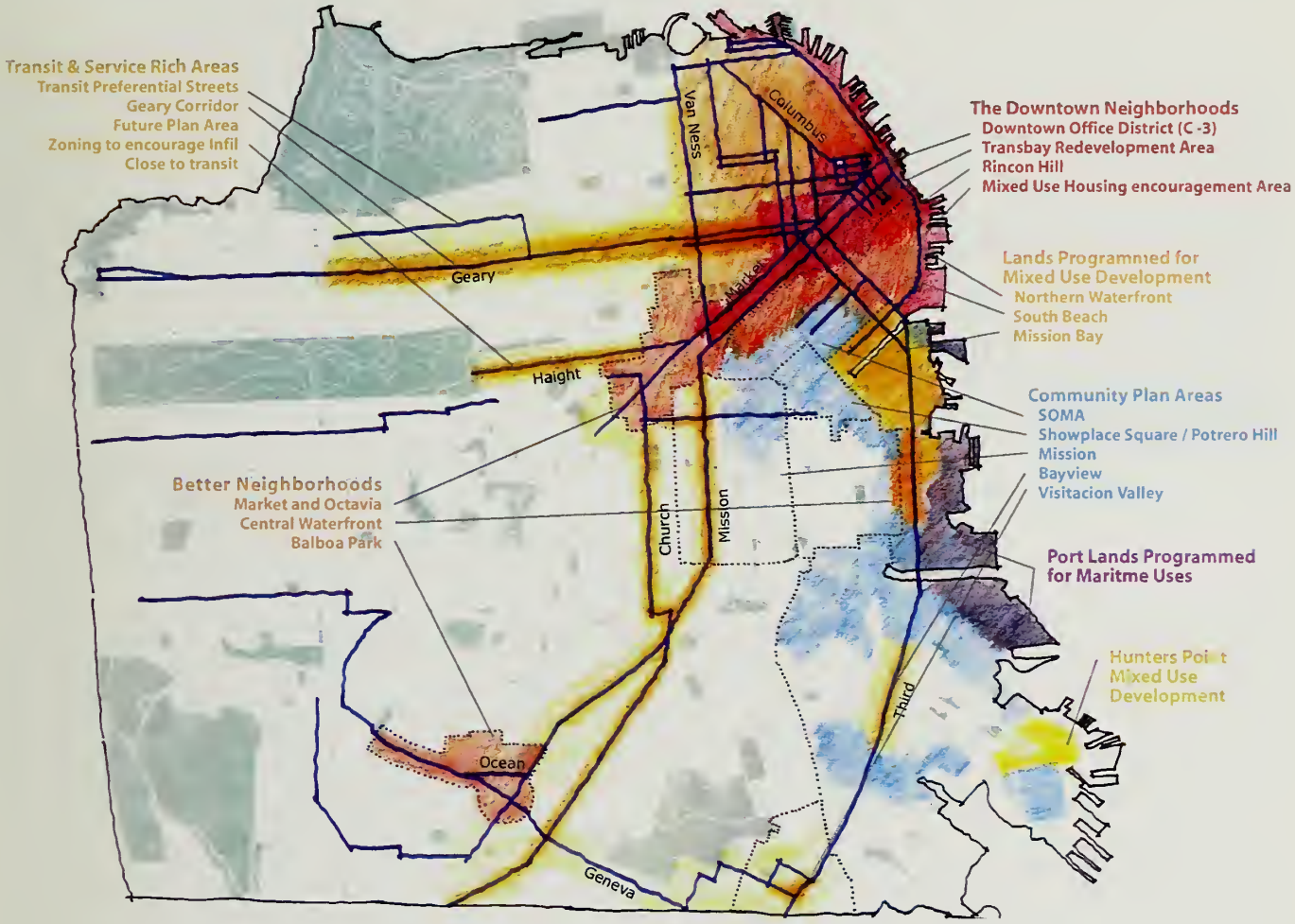
The Citywide Action Plan (CAP) comprehensively explores the issue of how to meet the need for housing and jobs citywide in ways that capitalize upon and enhance the best qualities of San Francisco as a place. The CAP seeks to direct a mix of housing and neighborhood-serving uses to places with good public transit and urban amenities; new office uses to the city's compact downtown core; and creative and productive activities to core industrial lands. The work of the Citywide Policy Planning Division of the Planning Department is focused on developing *General Plan* policy and permanent controls– revisions to zoning, review procedures and planning code requirements– that implement the CAP.

Five Pillars of the Citywide Action Plan

1. **Encouraging Housing and Better Neighborhoods Citywide.** Policy initiatives to encourage and facilitate the development of housing citywide, especially the development of affordable housing.

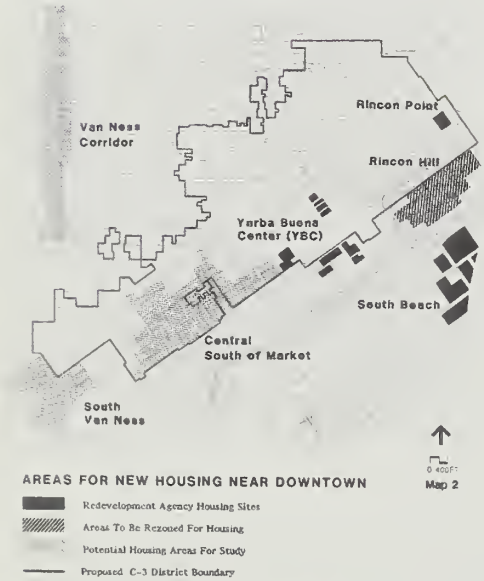
2. **The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative.** Comprehensive planning for new downtown neighborhoods in and around the downtown office core. This will include capturing housing potential in the downtown office district as well as creating new neighborhoods in areas such as Rincon Hill, the Transbay Terminal area, and lands in SoMa designated for housing encouragement through the Planning Department's community planning process.

3. **Infill in Transit and Service-Rich Areas.** Policy initiatives for supporting and encouraging higher-density, mixed-use-primarily residential infill in selected transit-rich areas.



4. **New Permanent Controls for Core Industrial Lands.** The department has determined which of San Francisco's industrially zoned lands are central to the city's economic health, and is developing new permanent controls to support creative and production activities in these core lands.

5. **New Permanent Controls for Surplus Industrial Lands.** Industrial lands determined through the department's land use analysis and community planning process not to be strategically important to the city's economic health are being made available for other uses, primarily housing. New permanent controls for these new uses are being prepared.



The 1985 Downtown Plan called for creating significant new housing in and around the downtown. The DNI builds on the policy framework provided by the Downtown Plan.

The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative

One pillar of the department's Citywide Action Plan, the Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative (DNI) will provide a comprehensive strategy for strengthening the vitality of the downtown by encouraging dramatic new housing and creating balanced, livable neighborhoods in and around the downtown core. This initiative will set the stage for as many as 40,000 new housing units downtown, while increasing certainty for neighbors and developers about how the neighborhoods should be built.

Goals for the Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative

A vital regional heart. In an increasingly sprawling, multi-centered region, building on our regional advantages will require bold initiatives to sustain an attractive climate for business and to provide a strong and stable housing supply for San Francisco's workforce.

A range of housing opportunities. While it has long been the Bay Area's employment center, relatively few people live in San Francisco's downtown. The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative will encourage substantial new housing around downtown, encouraging the whole range of people and families in San Francisco to live there– even families with children.

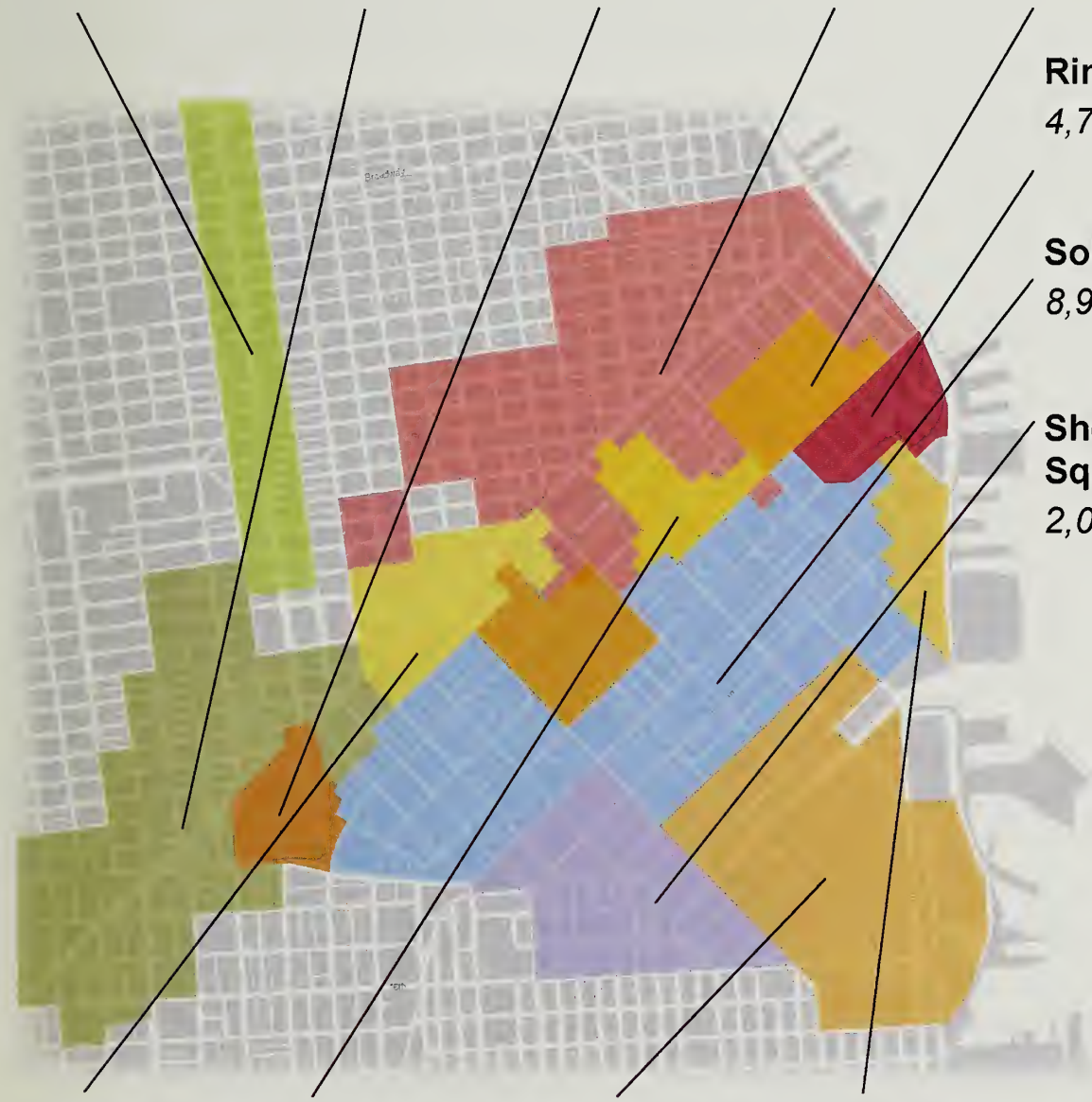
Balanced downtown neighborhoods that support urban living. It takes more than housing to make a livable place. The DNI will knit together a rich variety of urban amenities into the existing fabric, introduce a mix of new uses and activities, and invest in dramatic improvements to the public realm of streets and open spaces for new downtown residents.

A rich variety of uses and activities. The downtown area is a diverse and vital place. The DNI will build on its role as a regional center of employment and culture, and on its historic resources, businesses, cultural organizations and diverse residential population.

A balanced range of transportation choices. The downtown's compactness, gentle topography and access to transit make it an easy place to get around without a car. Here, more than anywhere, we need to make streets safe and attractive for those who walk and bicycle, and to make transit a truly convenient, reliable and dignified alternative to driving.

This initiative will maximize the positive aspects of growth to create strong downtown neighborhoods. Working with the public, the Planning Department will develop a strategy that responds to the challenges of change and ensures that as the downtown grows, it becomes a safer, more livable and thriving center for the city's civic, cultural and commercial life.

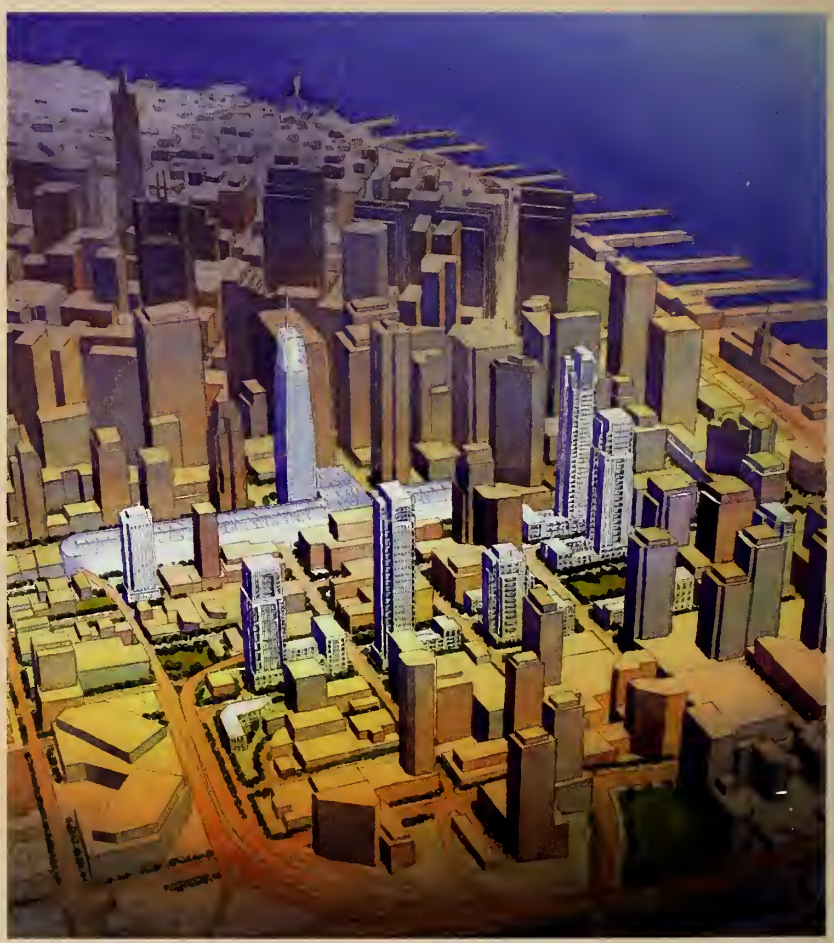
PLANNING AREAS



Potential new housing in the Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative planning area and surrounding areas.

Planning for Transbay

In 1989 the Loma Prieta earthquake damaged much of the transportation infrastructure in the Transbay Terminal area, including the Terminal itself. The Terminal Separator Structure and the Embarcadero Freeway were demolished, freeing up large amounts of land, portions of which are publicly owned. In 1994 the Board of Supervisors created the Transbay Redevelopment Survey Area. The Transbay 20/20 Concept Plan, released in 1996, put forward concepts for redevelopment of the terminal and its surrounding lands. Further planning was sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and released in 2001, included a conceptual design of the new terminal located roughly on the current terminal site. This planning efort also concluded that the new terminal would include multiple regional and bus lines, the terminus of the Caltrain extension, the possibility of high-speed rail, and that the the new terminal would be linked to the Bay Bridge via a single ramp.



At the end of 2002, the Redevelopment Agency and the Planning Department, working together, assembled a consultant team, led by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, to work with the community to create a land use and urban design program for the publicly-owned parcels in the Transbay area, referred to as the Transbay Design for Development.

A series of public workshops were held throughout 2003 to discuss the redevelopment area's land use, urban form, open space, and streetscapes. The plan that resulted from this process sets a clear vision for this portion of a larger new neighborhood—Transbay and Rincon Hill—that will take shape between Mission and Bryant Streets.

In planning for Transbay and Rincon Hill, planners have considered both districts in all proposals, including recommendations for streets, open space, retail development and overall urban form. Both share the development concept of four to eight-story buildings lined with ground-floor townhouses with stoops, punctuated by well-spaced slender towers. Folsom Street is on the boundary of both planning districts, and is envisioned as the heart of the larger Transbay and Rincon Hill neighborhood, with community-serving retail and a civic presence. Form, shadow, and view analysis for both districts have taken the development proposals from the other into account.

Planning for Transbay (continued)

The design plan for Transbay envisions a new Transbay Terminal as the focus for commuters and visitors. Improved regional bus service, seamless connections to Muni and BART, and future Caltrain and high-speed rail will link all corners of the Bay Area and major West Coast cities to downtown. A plaza and pavillion will face Mission Street, providing a grand civic space and entry to the terminal. A mixed-use "Transit Tower" on Mission Street adjacent to the terminal and associated civic space will mark this as a hub of downtown, and will be a landmark on the skyline accentuating the signature form of the city's downtown "mound."

The plan calls for:

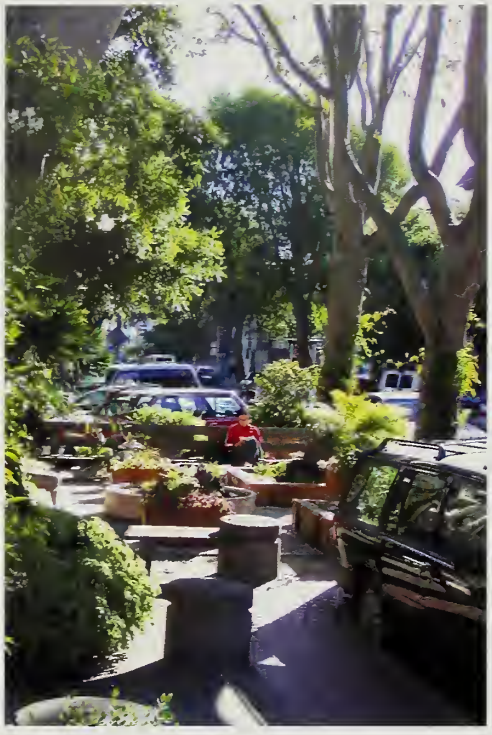
- Mixed-use development, primarily housing, circling the new terminal to the south on the large parcels of publicly-owned land, doing its part towards creating a full-service urban neighborhood.
- Folsom Street transformed into Folsom Boulevard, a new public promenade lined with ground-floor shops and services, the neighborhood heart of Transbay and Rincon Hill, and connecting the neighborhood to the waterfront and Yerba Buena Center.
- Main, Beale, and Spear Streets redesigned as "living streets" with extra-wide sidewalks featuring open space amenities, lined with townhouses with landscaped stoop entries. An enhanced Beale Street will be the major north to south pedestrian connection linking the new neighborhood to the waterfront and downtown.
- A major new public park just north of Folsom Street between Main and Beale Streets, providing refuge from the hustle and bustle of downtown. New narrow lanes with townhouses and some neighborhood retail will front the park to the north and south.
- New fine-grained infill buildings with a wide mix of uses filling in gaps in the historic district east of Second Street. Space under and adjacent to the freeway and terminal ramps will be transformed with active recreational and community facilities.

The plan will be accompanied by urban design guidelines and standards to ensure that new development does its part to create a vibrant urban neighborhood.

Looking east down a new extension of Clementina Street, lined with townhouses, towards the proposed new Transbay park.

II Neighborhood Vision

This chapter sets out the goals for the Rincon Hill Plan. It describes the vision for the neighborhood, including the vision for the development concept and for public realm improvements.



Goals and Intent

A new plan for Rincon Hill will encourage its transformation into a high-density, mixed-use residential neighborhood adjacent to the downtown, in coordination with the neighboring Transbay area. Revised zoning and planning code controls will enable the area to evolve into a full-service, walkable urban place as new development takes place. The planning controls proposed in this report will not just regulate new development, but also facilitate a substanatial increase in housing development to meet the needs of San Francisco's work force (including families with children), and bring certainty to the development process so that there are clear rules as to what can and cannot be built. At the same time, it supports the creation of a neighborhood with an attractive and engaging public realm of streets and open spaces, that provides easy access to shops and services.

The changes to planning code controls proposed in this document are implementing actions of the city's *General Plan* and *Transit-First Policy.* They aim to better realize the policies in the Rincon Hill Area Plan and the Housing, Transportation, and Urban Design Elements of the *General Plan,* as well as the objectives of the *Transit-First Policy* in the City Charter. The goals for the proposed rezoning of Rincon Hill are to:

- Encourage the development of a dynamic new mixed-use residential neighborhood in the Rincon Hill area.
- Encourage new housing production that meets a variety of housing needs, especially workforce housing, capitalizes upon Rincon Hill's premiere downtown location and rich transit service, and creates a residential environment with strong access to light, air, open space and neighborhood amenities.
- Develop a cohesive urban form for Rincon Hill that fits into the larger form of the downtown, the natural landform, and the waterfront and the Bay.
- Create a variety of new open spaces to meet the needs of a new residential population.
- In accordance with Objectives 2 and 7 of the *Transit-First Policy,* carefully manage parking supply and pricing to encourage travel by foot, public transportation, and by bicycle.

- In accordance with Objectives 3 and 5 of the *Transit-First Policy,* create an attractive and human-scaled streetscape of the highest quality along Folsom Boulevard, and make extensive pedestrian improvements to other neighborhood streets such that they become suitable residential environments and integral components of the civic open space system.

- Ensure adequate sunlight and the least amount of wind and shadow on public streets and open spaces.

- Preserve and enhance public views to the Bay, and to the downtown.

- Preserve and enhance the character and scale of finely-grained residential areas within the Rincon Hill area.

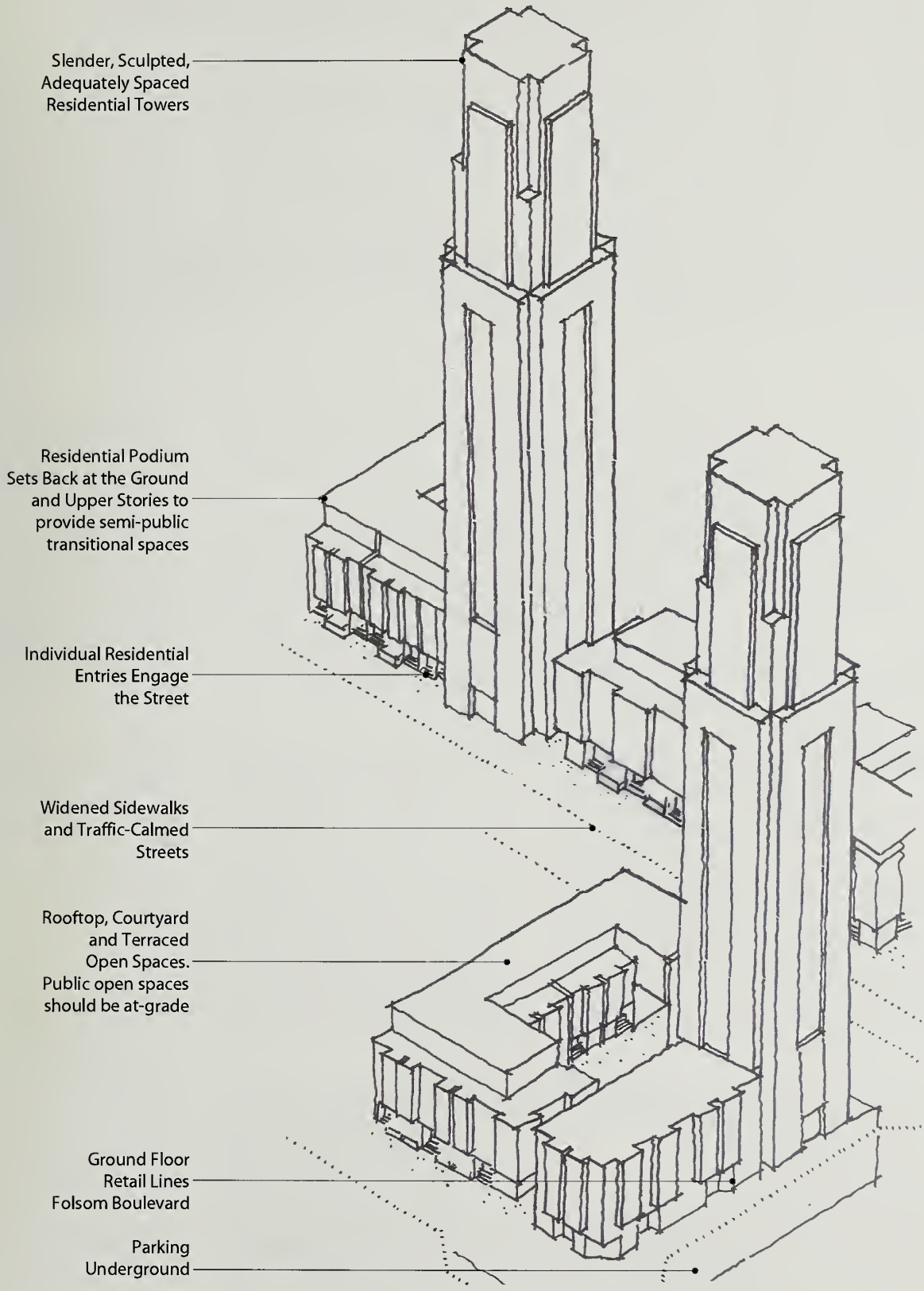
- Ensure that new development creates an engaging physical transition between private development and the public realm, with special attention to the pedestrian ground-level experience.

This plan will set the stage for Rincon Hill to become home to as many as 7,500 to 10,000 new residents.

Neighborhood Vision

The new Rincon Hill neighborhood is envisioned with buildings up to 85 feet in height, punctuated by slender high-rise residential towers, spaced to allow sunlight to streets and maintain an airy feeling to the skyline. A variety of open spaces, ranging from public parks, plazas and courtyards to private roofdecks, terraces and porches, would be ample and interspersed throughout the district. Building service functions, loading, and parking would be set away from the street or underground.

Neighborhood-serving retail would be concentrated along Folsom Street as the heart of the Rincon Hill and Transbay neighborhood and the north/south streets would be lined with individual townhouse units with front stoops and landscaped setbacks. Main, Beale and Spear Streets, extending all the way through Rincon Hill and Transbay, would be improved as "living streets," with reduced traffic lanes and significantly widened sidewalks featuring usable open spaces and areas for both passive and active recreation. The open space network would feature a new large open space at the anchorage of the Bay Bridge, with frontage on Harrison Street, on land currently owned by Caltrans.


Slender, Sculpted, Adequately Spaced Residential Towers
Residential Podium Sets Back at the Ground and Upper Stories to provide semi-public transitional spaces
Individual Residential Entries Engage the Street
Widened Sidewalks and Traffic-Calmed Streets
Rooftop, Courtyard and Terraced Open Spaces. Public open spaces should be at-grade
Ground Floor Retail Lines Folsom Boulevard
Parking Underground

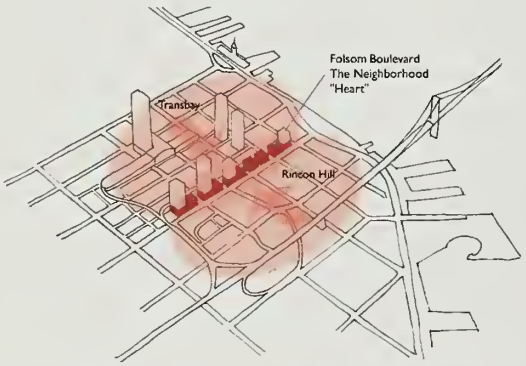
Development concept for Rincon Hill

III Plan Elements

Land Use | Urban Form | Neighborhood Design | Public Realm | Preservation

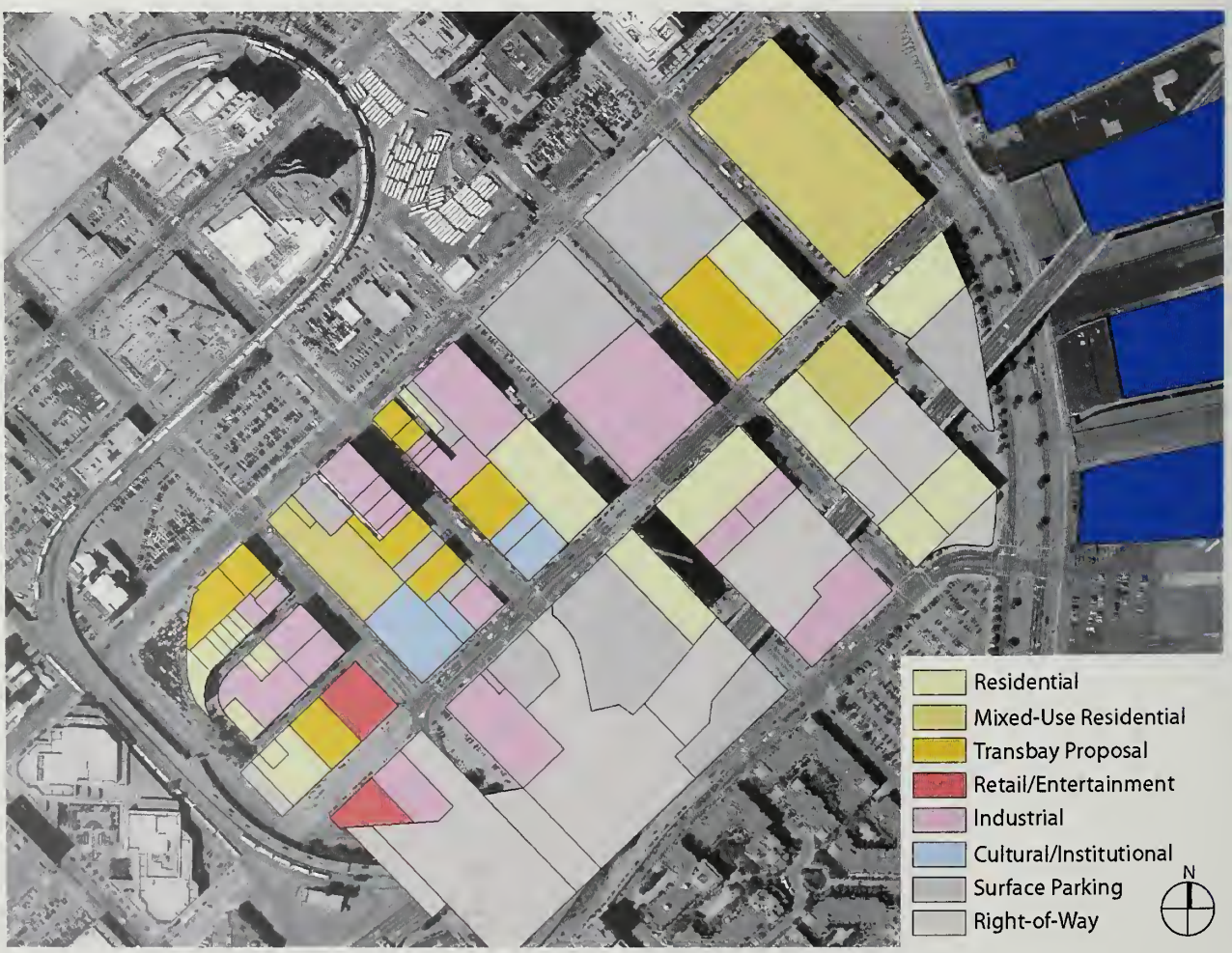
This chapter discusses the various complementary elements that must work together to create a vibrant new neighborhood in Rincon Hill, and the controls that would make the neighborhood vision a reality. The chapter is divided into Land Use, Urban Form, Neighborhood Design, the Public Realm, and Preservation.

Land Use



Folsom Street will be the heart of the new Rincon Hill and Transbay neighborhoods. (Graphic: Transbay Design for Development)

The South of Market area is expansive and diverse, making it a complex area to plan. The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative (DNI) looks at this broad area and recognizes that there are smaller distinctive neighborhoods (or sub-districts) that are long-standing self-identifying areas or newer developing areas that are beginning to coalesce into neighborhoods based on shared relationships of use and building characteristics, topography, street patterns, or local landmarks. Many districts, such as Rincon Hill and Transbay, are undergoing major transitions. These neighborhoods need comprehensive attention and land use guidance to transform them from a largely haphazard assortment of vacant lots, warehouses, back offices, and unrelated residential developments into a real urban place: a pedestrian-oriented full-service neighbrohood supportive of urban living and with an enriching public realm.



Existing land use in Rincon Hill

Neighborhood Centers in the Downtown Neighborhoods

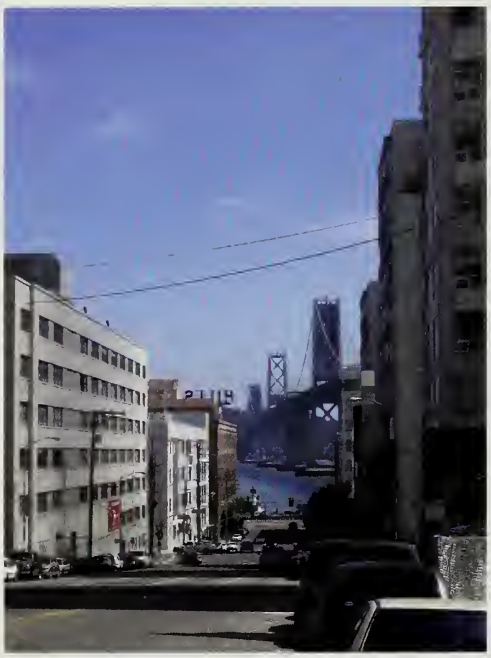
The current land use pattern in the neighborhoods South of Market is a mix of office, housing, retail, warehousing and industrial use. This use mix is one of the defining features of the area, and contributes to its eclectic character. However, in many areas, there is no identifiable concentrated neighborhood center to give each neighborhood a distinct identity, where residents or workers can walk to take care of simple errands, sit at a cafe, or relax in a small public space. As some areas are planned for more housing, walkable neighborhood centers will become more important.

The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative (DNI) identifies opportunities to create neighborhood hearts for residential and employment districts throughout the SoMa (identified in the graphic, this page). They build on and enhance those locations where neighborhood hearts are already beginning to emerge, such as Second Street south of the freeway or Folsom Street near Seventh Street. And they are located so that each sub-district has a neighborhood heart, so no SoMa resident would be more than a couple of blocks away from one.

For the new Transbay and Rincon Hill neighborhoods, Folsom Street between Main and First Streets will become the neighborhood heart. Folsom Street is envisioned to be a grand civic boulevard, with a consistent 45 to 85-foot streetwall, and ground-floor neighborhood retail along its length. Retail uses will also extend up Main and Beale Streets and a new mid-block pedestrian mews connecting Folsom Street to a neighborhood park just to the north, proposed as part of the Transbay neighborhood.

Preliminary Neighborhood Centers concept for the Downtown Neighborhoods. District centers (yellow) serve employment areas and neighborhood centers of different scales (blue, green, red) serve residential areas.

Land Use Districts



Existing buildings in Rincon Hill house a mix of large commercial and industrial uses.

Since the creation of the Rincon Hill SUD, new high-density housing has been added to the mix. This plan will update controls for new residential development, with a focus on urban form and neighborhood-building.

Historically, Rincon Hill was a desirable residential area. With the development of the Bay Bridge and even earlier, the area took on an industrial character. In recent years, a new residential presence has emerged as a result of the Rincon Hill Plan, which called for the area's transformation into a high-density residential neighborhood surrounded by an industrial buffer. Now, with the freeway ramps gone, Rincon Hill is the southern half of a larger new downtown neighborhood that includes the Transbay area just to the north. Folsom Street is envisioned as the heart of this new residential neighborhood.

The Rincon HIll Plan would create a new zoning district called the Rincon Hill Downtown Residential Mixed Use District ("Rincon Hill DTR") and eliminate the existing Rincon Hill Special Use District (SUD) and the underlying zoning designations (see graphics at right).

Use Mix

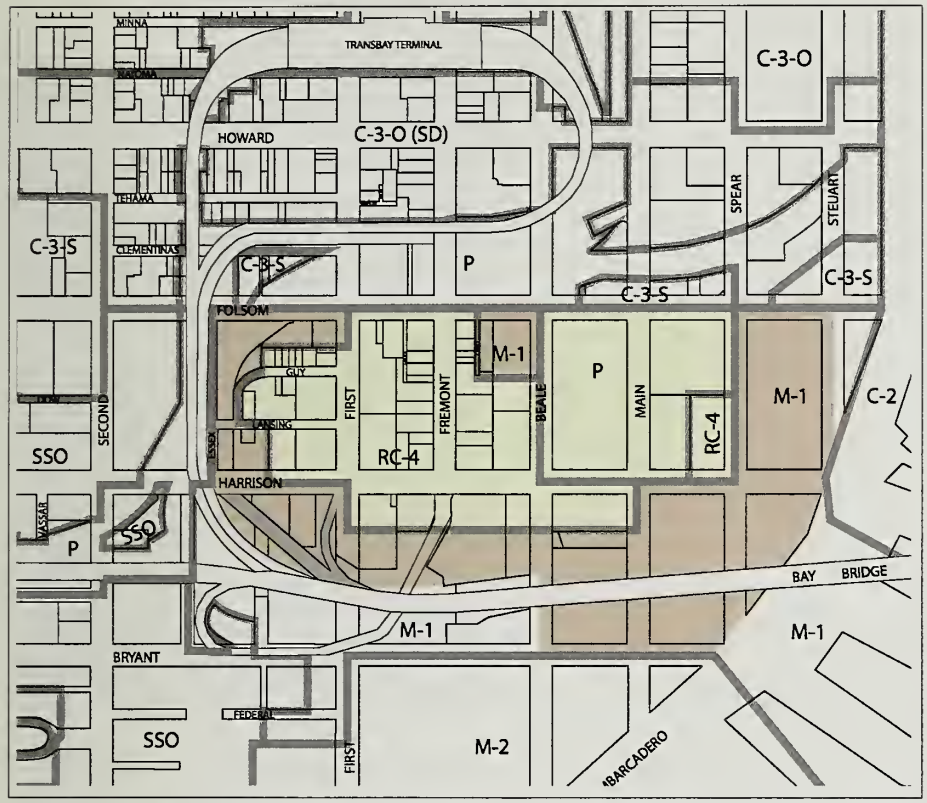
In recognition of its proximity to the downtown office district and its intended primary mixed-use residential character, uses in the new Rincon Hill DTR would generally be those permitted in the C-3-O District, with the exception of large medical institutions, massage establishments, and industrial/chemical research uses, which would be prohibited. Currently, permitted uses in the SUD are based on the underlying zoning districts.

To ensure a balance of residential to commercial uses, a minimum of six square feet of residential space would be required for every square foot of new commercial space, which carries over the current requirement in the Residential Subdistrict of the existing Rincon Hill SUD, Planning Code Section 249.1. (Square footages for this purpose are calculated as net occupiable square feet)

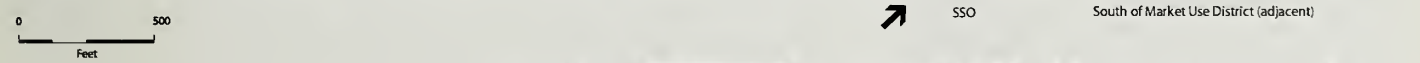
Residential uses would be the only permitted uses above 85 feet in height.

Residential Density

The current Rincon Hill Residential SUD has no residential density limit; however, the Rincon Hill Commercial-Industrial SUD has a maximum density of 1 unit per 200 square feet of lot area. The proposed Rincon Hill DTR would have no residential density limit. However, unit size would be regulated by bedroom requirements in some units. Additionally, residential uses would count toward overall FAR.

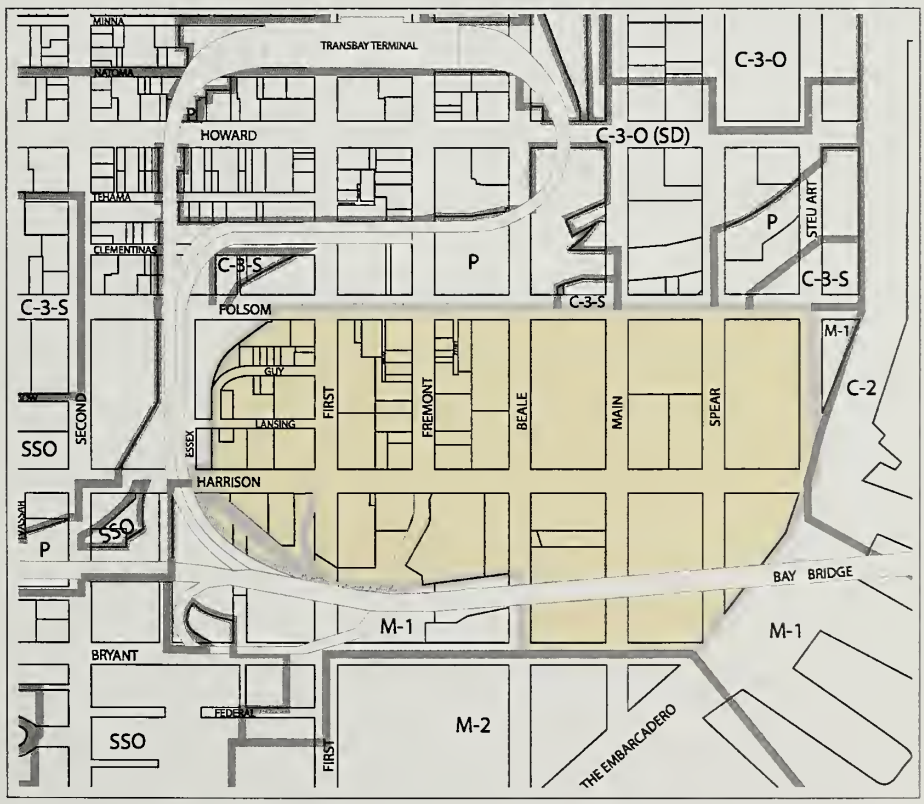


Current zoning for Rincon Hill



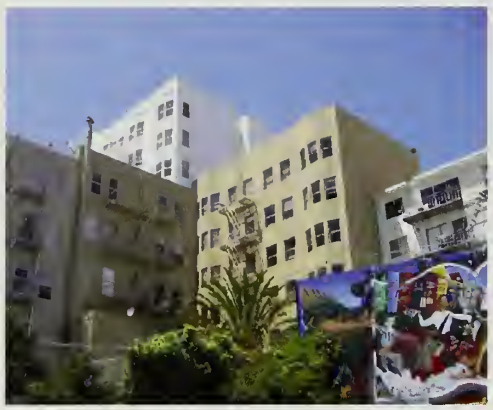
Zoning Boundary
Rincon Hill Residential Special Use District
Rincon Hill Commercial/Industrial Special Use District
Proposed Rincon Hill Mixed Use District

RC-4	Residential-Commercial Combined District, High Density
M-1, M-2	Industrial Districts
P	Public Use District
C-3-O, C-3-R, C-3-S	Downtown Commercial Districts (adjacent)
SSO	South of Market Use District (adjacent)



Proposed zoning for Rincon Hill

Housing



Rincon Hill, along with other neighborhoods around the downtown, has long been identified as an appropriate area for new high-denisty housing, due to its strategic location and a preponderance of underutilized or vacant sites. To this end, the plan's preferred development option creates the potential for a total of approximately 4,200 new housing units, adding to the approximately 1,450 units already existing or under construction in Rincon Hill.

Absolute numbers of housing units are only part of the picture, however. The Rincon Hill Plan seeks to create a mixed-income neighborhood, with a variety of housing-unit sizes and types to support a variety of family types. Existing city policy requires developments of 10 units or more to build at least 12% affordable units on-site, or 17% off-site. Because Rincon Hill at present has little residential presence and few affordable units, in order to create a truly mixed-income neighborhood with housing opportunities for families, seniors and others, this plan would require all affordable units to be built within the district.

The Rincon Hill Plan also encourages and creates opportunities for units that better serve families. First, there are targets for new development to create a certain percentage of 2 and 3 bedroom units, which better house families than studios or one-bedroom units. Additionally, the plan's development model will lead to a substantial number of units located in podiums and in street-fronting townhomes, in addition to tower units. These podium and townhome units afford greater access to open spaces (both private and public) and to the life of the street, making them appropriate for families with children. As they are cheaper to construct than tower units, and do not command the price premiums of tower units with views, they can also be more affordable. However, affordable and family units should also be located in towers, mixed in with market-rate units.

Affordable Housing Requirements

A viable residential neighborhood needs housing at a full range of prices. In Rincon Hill, this can only be achieved by requiring that the city's policies for inclusionary housing be exercised within the district. Required inclusionary affordable housing units must be built inside of the Rincon Hill DTR. Within the district, affordable units can be inter-mixed with market-rate units within the same project at the unit mix and sizes described in the following section, or they can be constructed off-site (off-site 17% inclusionary requirement still applies).

Housing Unit Mix

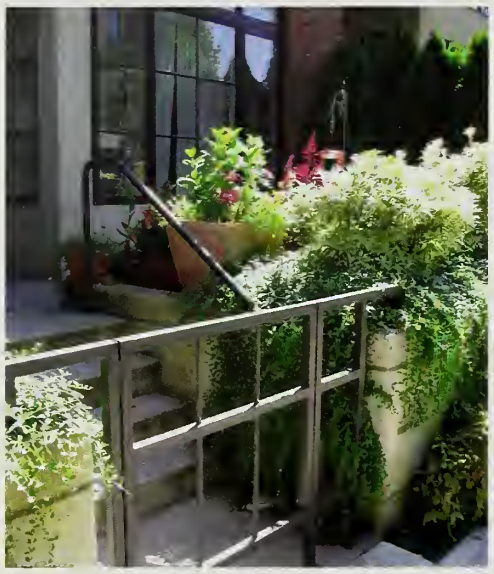
This plan sets a goal for unit mix to be varied within the same project as follows:

- Two-bedroom units: 25 percent minimum
- Three-bedroom or larger units: 15 percent minimum

This mix of unit types can be constructed off-site within the Rincon Hill DTR as part of another project. If constructed as part of another project, it must be in addition to that project's required mix of units and sizes.

The following types of housing are exempt from unit mix and size requirements: housing for seniors or physically handicapped, affordable projects (100 % below market rate), SROs, group housing, and housing for institutions required to submit Institutional Master Plans.

Ground-Floor Retail and Residential Frontages

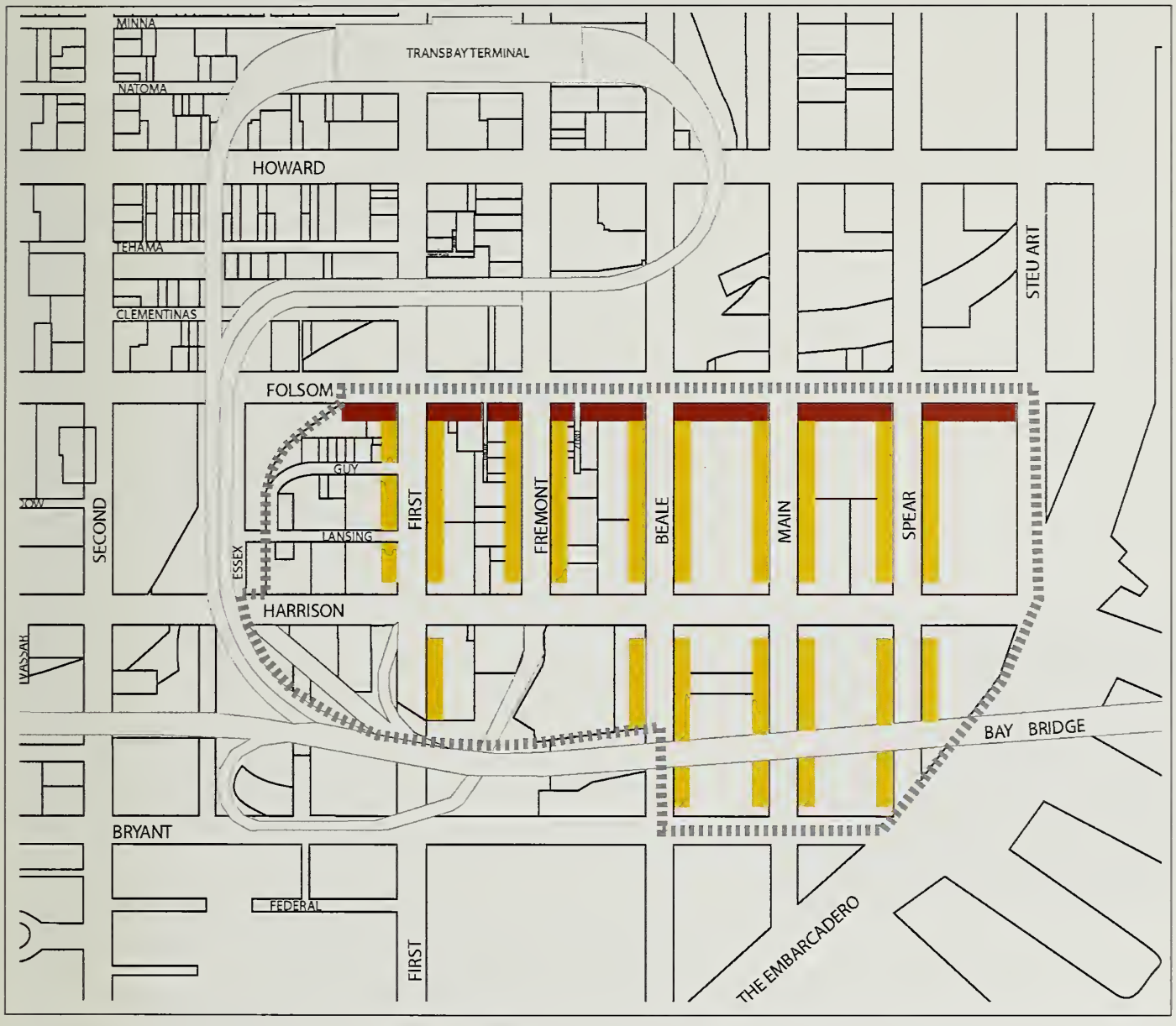


The development concept for Rincon Hill provides active uses on lower floors that will, by orienting uses and activities outward rather than inward, add life and activity to public spaces and allow residents and businesses to have a presence along the street. In combination with a streetscape plan that improves the quality of streets for pedestrian use, individual retail spaces will spill out onto Folsom Boulevard, much like other neighborhood commercial streets throughout the city. Townhouse units on lower floors will have their entries from the street, with stoops, landscaping and raised porches creating an inviting, usable transition from private spaces to the street.

- Pedestrian-oriented retail, residential, office and other community services are required ground floor uses on all street-facing frontages, except for the minimum frontage required for fire doors, parking and loading, and utilities that require street front locations.

- For frontages on Folsom Boulevard, ground floor space suitable for retail use is required for no less than 60 percent of all frontages. Ground floor retail space is also encouraged along Harrison, First, Fremont, Beale and Main Streets on corners and within towers where they come directly to street level.

- For frontages along Fremont, First, Main, Spear and Steuart Streets, individual ground floor residential units are required at intervals of no more than 25 feet, except where a tower comes directly to street level and carries that dimension through the entire façade, within 50 feet of a corner, or where parking access and utilities are necessary.



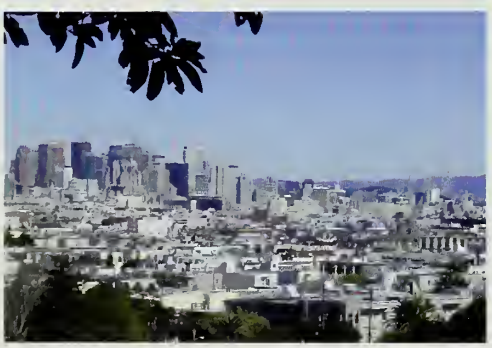
Locations of required active ground-floor uses

Urban Form

In guiding the physical character of a new high-density neighborhood on Rincon Hill, there are two different scales of urban form to consider:

- the larger form issues addressing the presence of towers which affect the broader cityscape in addition to affecting the livability of the neighborhood; and
- the neighborhood scale of the podium height and below where the treatment of the ground floor and building articulation define the place for the pedestrian within the district.

Before conferring any development rights for specific projects in the area, the most appropriate urban form must be reached based on careful consideration and public dialogue of overall key urban form objectives and analysis of how different alternatives achieve these objectives.



Towers: Shaping the Cityscape and Neighborhood

The basic vision of this high-density neighborhood is generally mid-rise podiums with individual ground-level townhouses opening onto landscaped streets, punctuated by slender residential towers. However, the larger decisions about the proliferation of these towers needs great study as it greatly impacts the public realm.

Urban form decisions about the quantity, arrangement, density and sculpting of towers in the district impacts two key aspects of the city: the skyline and the ground level public realm.

Concern over the skyline is not just abstract whimsy. The cityscape defines views from public places and establishes our relationships to our surroundings– the Bay, the bridges, the hills, the downtown, the neighborhoods. The way buildings are grouped at centers of activity or rise and fall with topography establish and reinforce our image of the city and orientation to its features. San Francisco's skyline and the city's image are unique and recognized throughout the world, and changes to it must be made deliberately with full knowledge. Because they are large objects visible from great distances, the presence of towers affects the public in ways that lower buildings of 85 feet and less do not.

The arrangement of towers in the district also can be a strong determinant of livability of the immediate area at street level. Rincon Hill will be a primarily residential district, not an office district, and the presence of towers must be tailored to support a living environment. Great care must be taken to maintain sunlight to public spaces–parks and streets–and a feeling of "airiness" that maximizes exposure to the sky and the permeation of views through the district, so that there is not an experience of crowding.

Form considerations at both scales are not primarily concerned with the experience from within specific buildings or towers (although correct tower spacing and location do create valuable views), but with the overal public experience of the city and safeguarding and enhancing the public realm.

The following urban form objectives must be met in considering the appropriate form for Rincon Hill:

- Create a clear urban form with harmonious skyline transitions to the Transbay area and downtown core to the north.
- Accentuate the topography of Rincon Hill with taller towers concentrated at the top of the hill, while allowing visual permeability in the flatland viewshed.
- Preserve the view of the downtown "mound" from the Bay Bridge
- Preseve views of the Bay Bridge, the Bay, and the East Bay Hills from the downtown office core and key public vantages.
- Minimize shading of public spaces, including new parks in both Transbay and Rincon Hill, and streets, especially Folsom Boulevard and "living streets." Avoid creating canyons of towers along streets.
- Maximize sky exposure from street level and maintain an airiness to the skyline for neighborhood livability.
- Taper towers down toward the Bay to preserve views and create an appropriate scale along the waterfront.

The existing controls have led to regular granting of exceptions and have produced squat, bulky buildings standing shoulder-to-shoulder. Therefore, the new proposal seeks to raise heights to facilitate the creation of well-spaced slender towers that are welcome additions to the cityscape and to create a livable neighborhood at their bases. This concept allows for greater housing development potential than exists under current controls, and contributes to the district's livability for everyone.

Success of a new high-rise district on Rincon Hill will be measured by the degree to which it ensures adequate sunlight to streets and public spaces, preserves openness to the sky both from ground level and when looking through it, maximizes views through the district to the city's features, and creates a harmonious addition to the skyline that is unified with the larger city form.

The main components of urban form which affect these objectives are tower floor size (bulk), separation or spacing of towers, and height. In their effects on the cityscape, these building aspects are closely interrelated; carefully-prescribed balance of limitations on each of these is necessary to establish the proper form.

Bulk/Floor Size

In general terms, the taller a building is, the bulkier it must be to accommodate elevators and provide structural support. Beyond this basic fact, there is some leeway in determining a feasible maximum size, with maximum slenderness being the optimal public goal.

Seismic requirements dictate a minimum size to the core of a building. Things that determine this include minimum width and number of shear walls in the core, and the minimum separation of exit stairs. Space-saving "scisssor" stairs, where both sets of exit stairs share one shaft, but are separated internally, are not permitted in San Francisco. Additionally, structural system requirements change when a building's height exceeds 240 feet, necessitating larger structural cores, which will support buildings 550 feet in height or taller.

Once structural needs are accommodated, the other basic determinants of core size are elevator requirements; taller buildings necessitate more elevators to serve the greater number of units.

A building's floor efficiency is the ratio of leasable/salable area to total area of a given floor. (the greater percentage of a floor taken up by service and structural core, the lower is the efficiency). Developers and financial lenders prefer higher efficiencies and larger floor sizes. By contrast, the public interest lies in towers that are as slender as possible, so that they preserve views, sunlight, and sky access. National analysis has shown that rule-of-thumb efficiencies vary by city and even within cities, and the cost of land and desirability of the location plays greatly into determining acceptable efficiencies. In Rincon Hill, efficiencies of around 80 percent are generally acceptable.

Finally, an elegant slender tower generally has a higher ratio of height to bulk. Planning Department analysis has shown this ratio to be around 3.5:1 for towers between 240 and 400 feet in height.

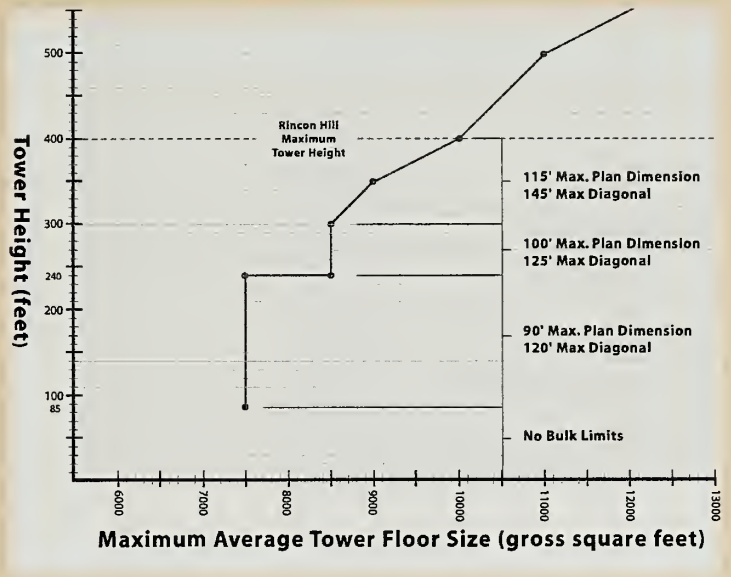
Recent development in Rincon Hill has resulted in squat, bulky towers; as these images show, a more elegant urban form can be produced by allowing greater height but limiting tower bulk/floor size and increasing tower separation.

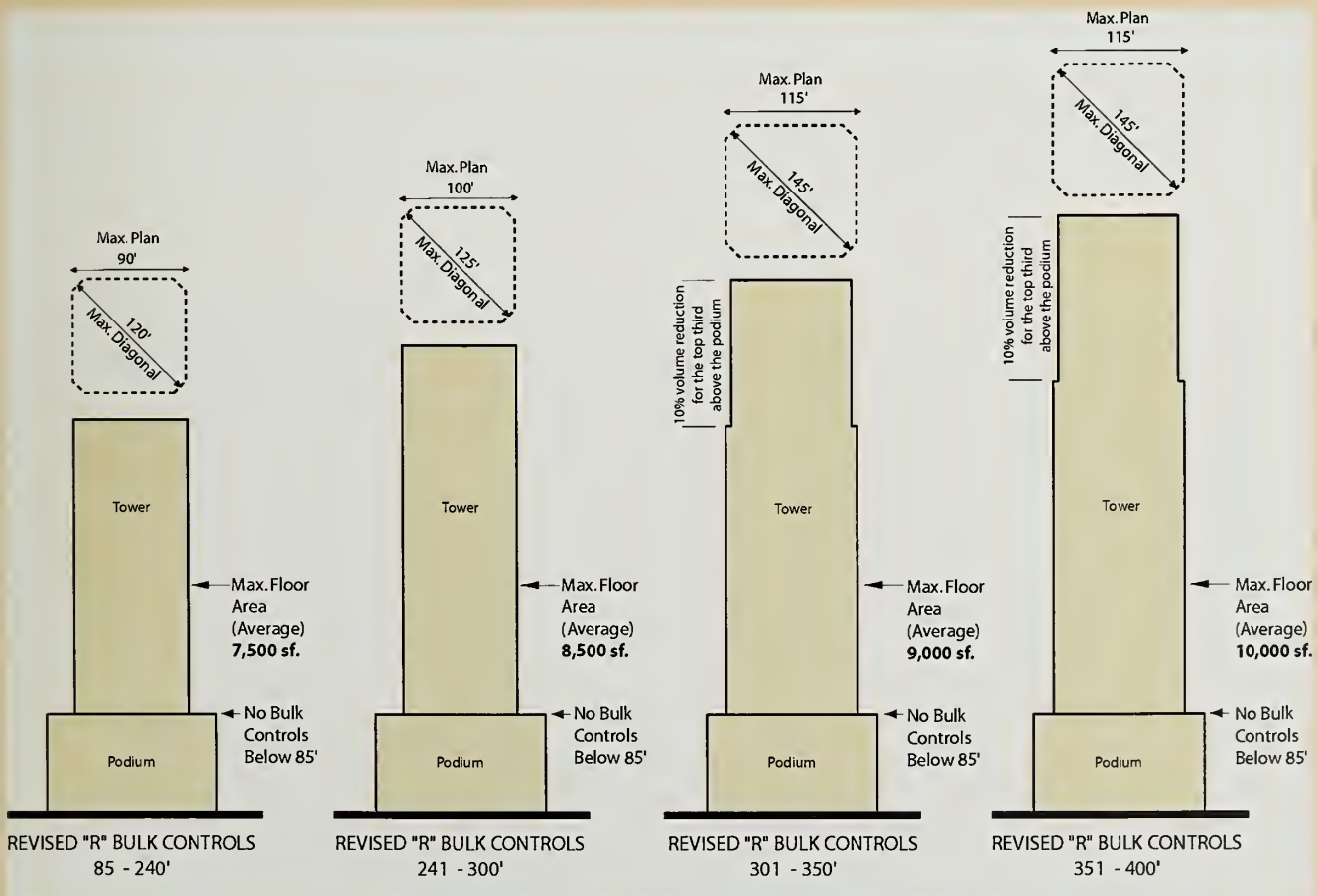
Tower Bulk Controls

Based on analyses of practicalities for construction types and floor efficiencies for buildings of various heights, as well as proportions for elegant towers, the graphics on this page indicate the maximum floor areas and dimensions for towers in Rincon Hill.

Individual floor area could not exceed the average floor area by more than 5 percent.

A 10% volume reduction in floor area would be required for the top 1/3rd of any tower that is 300 feet in height or taller.




Max. Plan 90'
120' Max. Diagonal
Tower
Max. Floor Area (Average) 7,500 sf.
No Bulk Controls Below 85'
Podium
REVISED "R" BULK CONTROLS 85 - 240'
Max. Plan 100'
125' Max. Diagonal
Tower
Max. Floor Area (Average) 8,500 sf.
No Bulk Controls Below 85'
Podium
REVISED "R" BULK CONTROLS 241 - 300'
Max. Plan 115'
145' Max. Diagonal
10% volume reduction for the top third above the podium
Tower
Max. Floor Area (Average) 9,000 sf.
No Bulk Controls Below 85'
Podium
REVISED "R" BULK CONTROLS 301 - 350'
Max. Plan 115'
145' Max. Diagonal
10% volume reduction for the top third above the podium
Tower
Max. Floor Area (Average) 10,000 sf.
No Bulk Controls Below 85'
Podium
REVISED "R" BULK CONTROLS 351 - 400'

Closely-built squat and bulky towers recently built on Rincon Hill have led to the consideration of a more elegant form that preserves sunlight and sky from the street.

Tower Spacing

The distance that towers are spaced from each other determines how much sunlight reaches the streets, how views through the district are maintained, how much sky a person walking down the street can see, and the general feeling of airiness versus a sense of crowding. As buildings get taller (and hence bulkier), there is a need for greater separation of towers to maintain an equal amount of sunlight and sky.

Ideally, there would always be more sky than building above the podium level on each block– never a greater ratio than 1:1 building to sky– so that sky is the defining feature of a district punctuated by towers, rather than towers dominating with small slivers of sky. This suggests that there should be tower spacing at least equal to the greatest horizontal dimension of towers.

Additionally, both individual buildings and groups of buildings (the skyline) are generally viewed from streets and other public places at a diagonal, or oblique, angle, rather than head-on, making their apparent width on the sky much greater than simple facade width would indicate. Building "diagonal" dimensions (the greatest horizontal distance between two exterior walls) are markedly greater than the facade width, suggesting that an appropriate tower separation to preserve sky access and views is no less than the diagonal dimension of towers, rather than the width of a facade. This is especially true for Rincon Hill, where much of the district is viewed obliquely from the Bay Bridge for much of the time.

This photo of Vancouver illustrates how sufficient tower spacing maintains more sky than building to maintain sunlight and an airy skyline.

Creating a New High-Rise Residential District: Lessons from Vancouver

People point to the recent growth of downtown residential development in Vancouver as a model for Rincon Hill. Vancouver's approach to tower separation provides some lessons. Although Vancouver has a minimum tower separation standard of 80 feet, this is a safeguard of last resort, and actual built separations rarely approach this minimum. Because of many overlaying restrictions, Vancouver's built towers are generally substantially greater than 100 feet apart, and this for towers with substationally smaller floorplates than are proposed for Rincon Hill.

Source: Vancouver Planning Department.

Master Plans vs. Individual Parcels

Most tower development in Vancouver has occurred on very large sites under single-ownership. These projects are guided by master development plans vetted with the city. Because the value of each tower is tied to the value of the whole district, it is in the master developer's interest to site towers so as to maximize views, privacy, light and air, and so as to produce an attractive urban form. In contrast, Rincon Hill is being developed on smaller parcels by individual developers. Their interests are to maximize value on their individual parcels, and are not as apparently tied to district-wide benefits. It is not incumbent upon Rincon Hill project sponsors to objectively consider tower spacing or siting for the good of the cityscape if that forecloses on a tower on their individual parcels. Comprehensive planning and clear, intelligent rules are thus key to seeing that the public good is carried out, to preserve public views, ensure light and air, create a livable neighborhood and ensure the uniqueness of the cityscape.

Layers of Controls: Density, Lot size, Shadows, Height, Views

Vancouver uses multiple layers of controls and urban design considerations to generate its feeling of airiness and to guide appropriate tower placement. Strict FAR controls restrict master-planned site density to 3:1, and infill sites to 5:1. To build towers, individual infill lots must meet minimum requirements of 375-foot frontage and 45,000 square feet minimum lot size, and must provide 40 foot setbacks. Shadow controls for towers allow no more than two hours of shadow on streets during mid-day. Towers in Vancouver are permitted up to 300 feet high provided that they meet public objectives, especially those of views and shadows, whereas towers on Rincon Hill are being considered up to 400 feet or greater. Additionally, before entertaining new high-rise development, Vancouver established 19 protected view corridors to the mountains and local landmarks. San Francisco has not established controls applicable to its unique public viewshed characteristics and view corridors. So far, careful sculpting of heights and bulk are the tools San Francisco uses to respect its spectacular setting.

Floorplates and Separation Ratios

Vancouver tower floorplates range from as low as 3,500 to 7,500 square feet, with few towers exceeding 8,500 square feet. Towers, currently limited in height to 300 feet, can be only 80 feet wide in any one direction; hence, even at the fail-safe minimum tower separation of 80 feet, there would never be less sky than building in the sky plane. (This 1:1 sky-to-building ratio above streetwall height is generally considered the minimum acceptable separation to maintain sky exposure from street level and sunlight to sidewalks and public spaces.) Because of differences in structural requirements, San Francisco towers have bulkier floor sizes. Floorplate requirements in this plan range from 7,500 to 10,000 square feet. With 10,000 square foot floorplate buildings, maintaining a minimum 1:1 sky-to-building ratio requires at least 100 foot tower separations, or 140 feet if diagonal dimensions are considered.

Tall towers that are slender and well-spaced (such as these in Vancouver) produce elegant forms and do not dominate the neighborhood environment at the street level.

Height

San Francisco's skyline is a very cherished feature of the city and has been carefully crafted over time through deliberate policies (more than once as a result of development proposals that challenge the city's established landscape). The *General Plan*'s Urban Design Element sets a clear vision of the city's form in addition to general policies that need to guide future rezoning and planning efforts. The "mound" formed by the downtown core of towers is a carefully sculpted form, creating a distinct "hill" in contrast to the surrounding natural hills. Equally important are the relationships and reciprocal vantages of these hills to the flat bay, the bridges, local landmarks, islands, and distant hills. Any changes to the city's recongized form must be deliberate and made with full knowledge of the advantages and impacts.

At the neighborhood level, when tall buildings are spaced very close together they can create dark canyons on streets and significantly reduce the amount of visible sky from the ground level. The further towers are spaced apart, the less height is an issue in shaping the overall neighborhood livability in terms of sulight, sky, and views through the district. However, the overall heights still need to be sculpted to consider the skyline and relationshiups to neighboring districts and features. Further, taller buildings have the potential to cast long shadows several blocks away if there are no intervening buildings or topography to block them. Modeling has been done to assess these impacts, resulting in the preferred urban form discussed in the following pages.

Urban Form Options

Current controls for Rincon Hill allow for no less than 150-foot tower separations and a maximum floor size of 7,500 square feet above a base height of 105 feet. However, numerous exceptions for vague and subjective criteria are built into the controls and have routinely been granted, such that buildings built in the district are generally much builkier and closer together than envisioned under the original plan.

Because of this less-than-desirable form emerging, there is a demand for a new set of controls that produce a better form of slender well-spaced towers that balances street-level neighborhood livability and the creation of a high-density downtown neighborhood. The following pages show these explorations and arrive at a preferred form alternative for the district.

Because analysis has determined the minimum floor size possible for towers of various heights, it will be assumed for the anlaysis of urban form that tower bulk is kept to the minimum possible for each height option. Thus the variables to be changed in the form options are tower spacing and height (understanding that higher towers produce bulkier buildings, and thus generally a need for greater tower separation). For the purpose of public discussion, a range of form options is considered, bracketed at the lower and higher ends of tower spacing, and then varying heights.

The effects of different urban form options (variations on height and tower spearation) on the cityscape is measured by using three-dimenstional modeling. This modeling can show from various vantage points changes to the skyline, views through and to the district, and the extent of shadows and sunlight on streets and open spaces.

Each form option produces a different mix of unit types (tower units versus podium units) and provides a different character for the district. Fewer towers translate to more opportunities to create street-level townhouses that engage the street and create a more fine-grained neighborhood. Additionally, podium units are cheaper to build, and hence translate to potentially greater affordability within the district. This is a trade-off with absolute quantity of units, which is slightly greater under scenarios with more of an emphasis on towers. It is important to note though, that the difference in housing unit potential under the three densest scenarios is less than 10% (or less than 500 units of over 5000 units total) and every scenario offers more potential than current controls allow. Yet each scenario would produce a significantly different quality of neighborhood and city form. The preferred option properly balances the quality of the public realm and cityscape with an increase in housing production.

Pipeline/Proposed Projects

In establishing an initial maximum development scenario for preliminary environmental analysis, begun before planning for the district, a minimum tower separation of 82.5 feet– the width of streets in the district– and basic heights roughly twice those currently allowed, were discussed. A number of projects are currently proposed that meet these guidelines, more or less. This scenario thus shows all projects proposed as this plan went to print, 11 towers in all. However, the pipeline shows a snapshot in time, and does not include all potential sites. There is no discipline of a minimum spacing of towers (multiple towers are proposed as close to each other as 60 feet) and there is no overall coordination to preserve sunlight and sky exposure. Nor is there significant concern with the sculpting of heights for an optimal skyline.

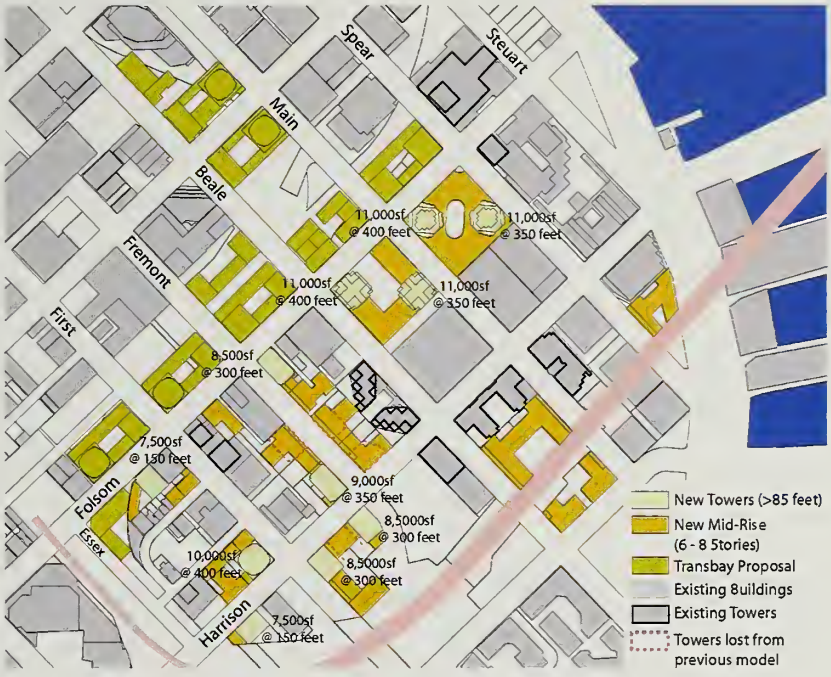
82.5' Minimum Tower Separation

This scenario extends the 82.5 foot tower separation and height controls from the early environmental analysis described above to the entire district, and is not restricted to just pipeline projects. It includes other logical sites where new podium buildings and towers might be built under these controls. This scenario maintains the lowest spacing between towers, and the greatest concentration of towers (14 towers). Under this scenario, an undesirable cluster of up to six towers would occur on Fremont Street between Harrision and Folsom. Additionally, built out to its fullest extent, Harrision street could also become canyonized with numerous towers.

Minimum sky exposure:

20 percent Block coverage/ 115 foot tower separation

Explorations of tower concentration, sky exposure, and sunlight reveal that as a minimum measure of livability there should be at least 80 percent of the block unbuilt above 85 feet, or no more than three towers per block. The previous alternative would allow five or more towers per block. A maximum percentage of developable block area permitted to be developed with towers (building area above 85 feet) of 20 percent of the total block area (*including* existing towers and space devoted to alleys) would allow 30,250 square feet of tower coverage (the typical Rincon Hill block is 151,250 square feet), or roughly three towers per block. This scenario weeds out a few towers from the previous alternatives to add airiness to the skyline, allow more sunlight to penetrate the district, and alleviates tower crowding, especially along Fremont Street and potentially along Harrison Street. This form produces 11 new towers.



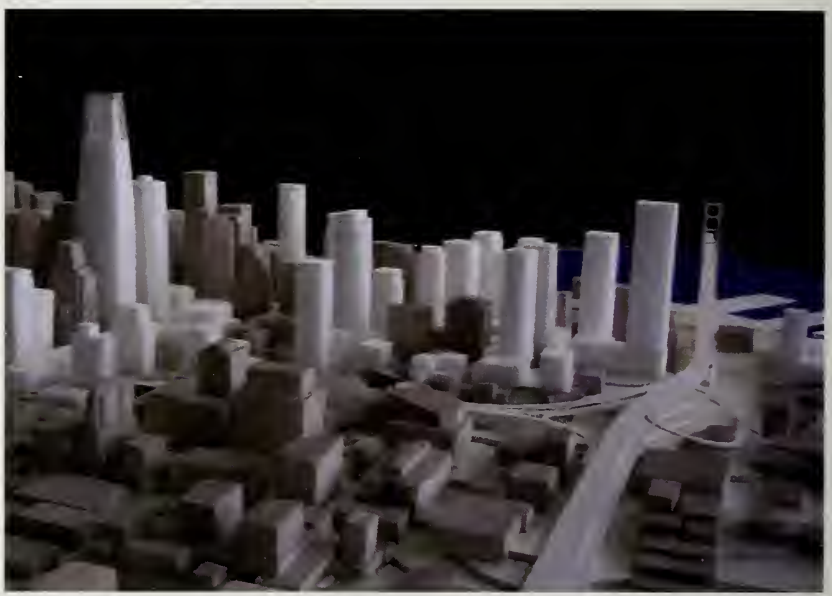
150' Minimum Tower Separation

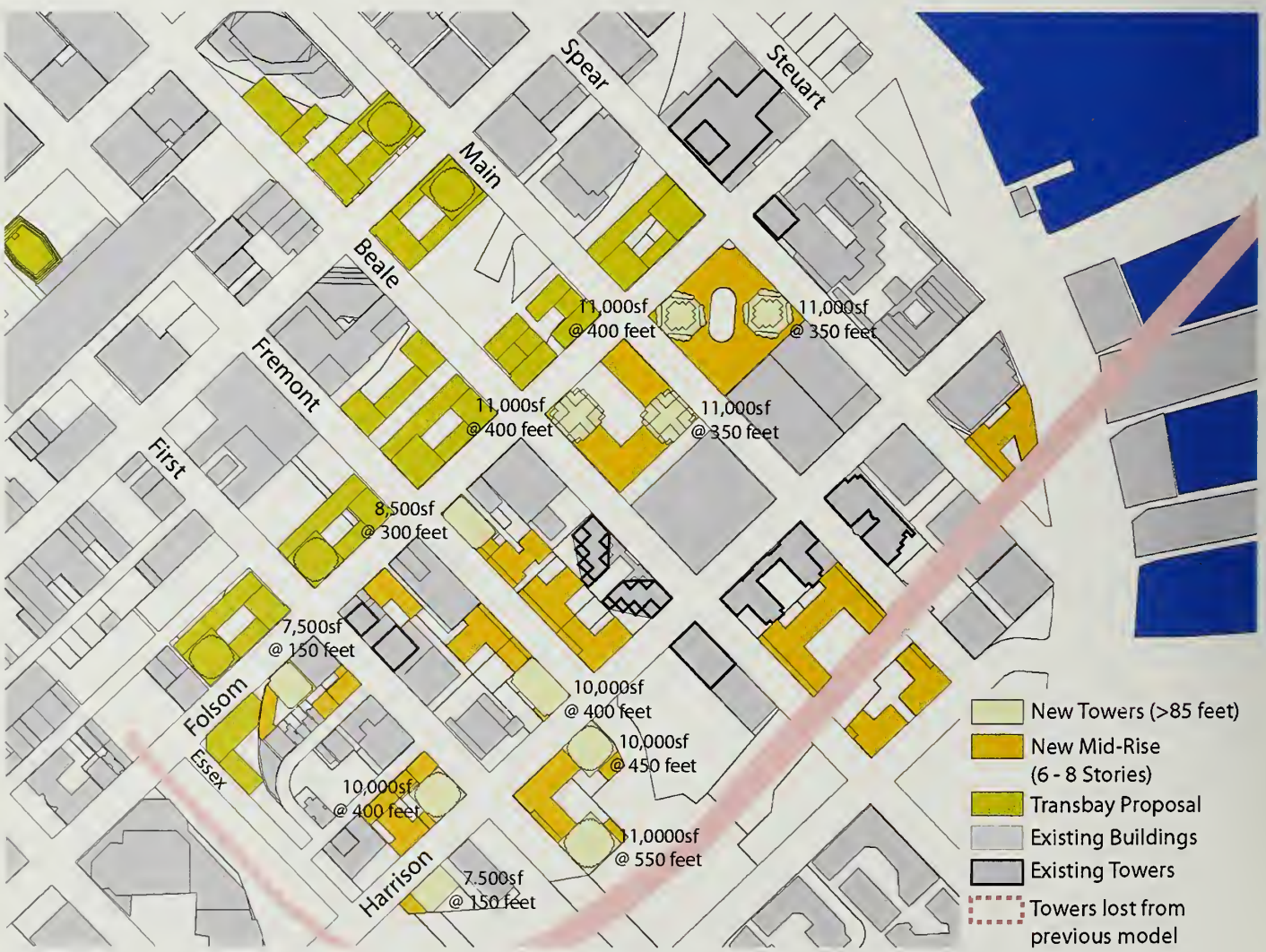
Tower spacing that matches existing controls of 150 feet (which also corresponds to about the diagonal dimension of towers) reduces the number of towers to 10, as only one tower would be possible on the Bank of America/ Unocal tower site adjacent to the freeway. Otherwise, this scenario is identical to the previous alternative.

Preferred Option:

Optimized Livability and Density

Scenarios that assume at least a 115 foot tower separation, or a maximum 20 percent tower block coverage create a more airy district with 10 or 11 towers, allowing greater views, sunlight and sky access to and from streets. The preferred option builds on this opened-up form, strategically raising tower heights at the top of the hill (near Harrison and First Streets), to increase housing potential, and to accentuate the topography of Rincon Hill on the skyline, differentiating its form from the downtown core.





Summary of Tower Controls

To ensure that towers in Rincon Hill produce the desired urban form shown and contribute to a more livable street-level neighborhood, a complimentary package of tower controls are necessary. These controls will also ensure that neighboring property owners work together toward a common vision and that the benefits of rezoning are distributed equitably, avoiding a "first-come first-served" situation where proposals rush to secure tower approvals regardless of the plan's objectives for the district. The following controls are proposed for towers:

- **Spacing.** Minimum tower spacing of 115 feet. Towers above 85 feet in height must be spaced by a minimum of 115 feet from all other towers within the same block. Towers are permitted to face one another across an intersection or street.

- **Bulk.** Maximum floorplate sizes. Towers cannot exceed the floor sizes and dimensions described on page 31.

- **Block Coverage.** Maximum three towers (defined as any development above 85 feet in height) per block. This is based on the maximum ideal tower development per block of 20 percent of the total block area. The typical Rincon Hill block is 151,250 square feet, allowing for 30,250 square feet of tower development, or three towers per standard block. Each numbered block is considered separately. Existing towers count toward total tower development.

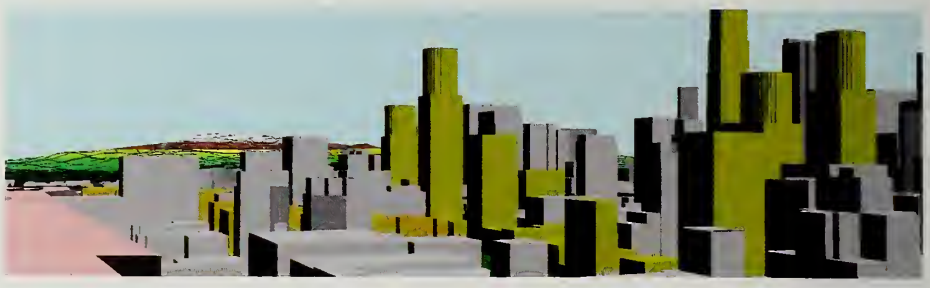
- **Height Sculpting.** To achieve the form of the preferred option, heights above 85 feet are sculpted to the topography of Rincon Hill, accentuating the crest of the hill at First Street.

- **Floor Area Ratio Controls and a Free-Floating TDR Program.** Regardless of designated height limit, all parcels in the district will be assigned a base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) less than is needed to construct a tower to full permitted height, but more than needed for an 85-foot podium building. (All uses above grade would be counted toward FAR in Rincon Hill, including parking and residential uses.) A district-wide Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program will be established for Rincon Hill: property owners desiring to build a tower would purchase unused FAR from other properties within the district. This base FAR would likely be between 7.0 and 10.0; tower development would generally need to be between 13.0 and 23.0 FAR (depending on the size of the parcel). Parcels with historic buildings will receive extra FAR rights to give priority to their preservation. Non-preservation parcels will not be permitted to sell off more FAR than is necessary to build a full 85-foot podium building on the site (an FAR of approximately 5.0 to 6.25). This FAR/TDR program is necessary to ensure that the design and development of neighboring properties are fairly coordinated and to minimize the degree to which "winners and losers" are created through rezoning.

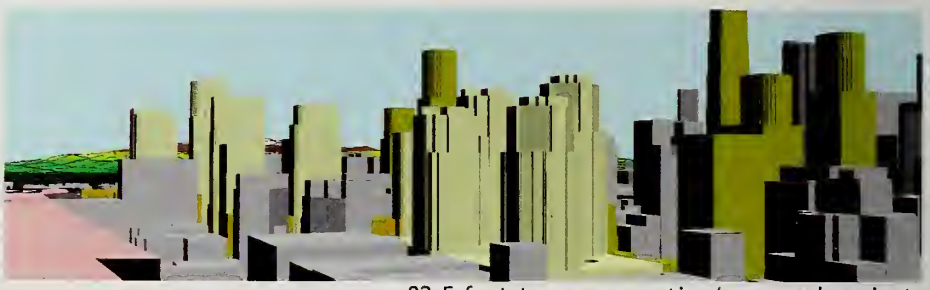
- **Minimum Parcel Size.** Minimum lot size needed to construct a tower. This will be calibrated such that tower development where there are several potential neighboring tower opportunity sites, such as on both sides of Fremont Street between Folsom and Harrison Streets, would require the coordination of neighboring properties. This would also ensure that adequate street frontage is available to provide the townhouse and podium components of the neighborhood vision, in addition to towers. Investigations have shown such a lot size minimum should be approximately 20,000 square feet, or about 1.75 times the size of the tower.

View from Bay Bridge: Over The Embarcadero

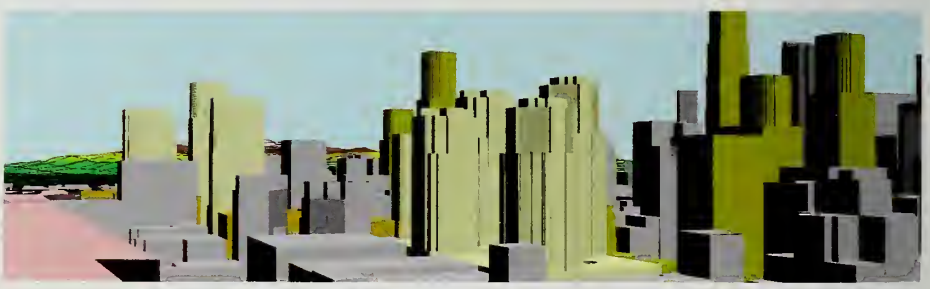
This series of views shows the view from the Bay Bridge as one crosses the Embarcadero. The primary difference between the 82.5' scenario and the others is the elimination of three towers along Fremont Street in the other scenarios, which keeps the hill form distinct, giving it a more unique position on the skyline and preserving a view corridor through the district.



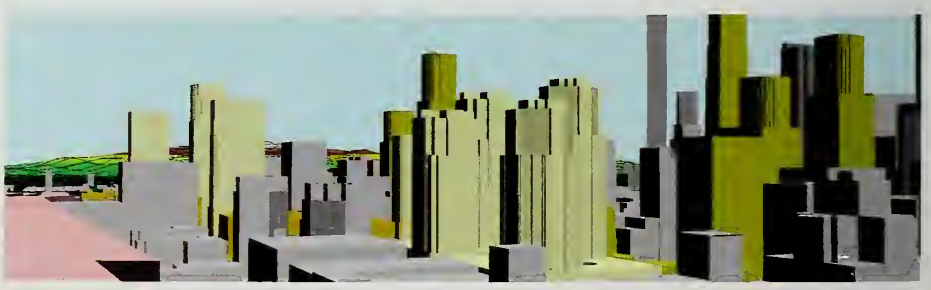
Base condition



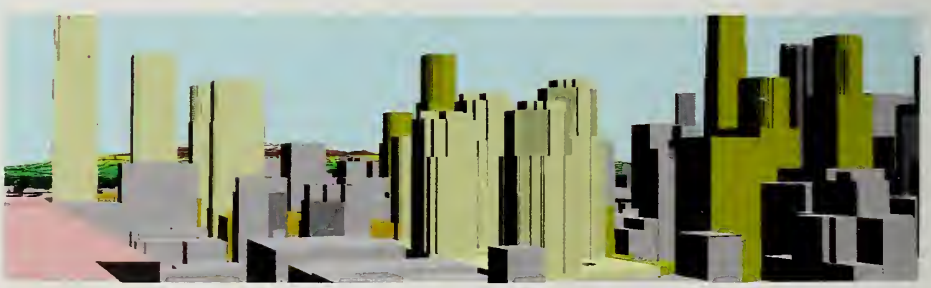
82.5-foot tower separation/proposed projects



Maximum tower coverage of 20 percent (or 115-foot tower separation)



150-foot tower separation



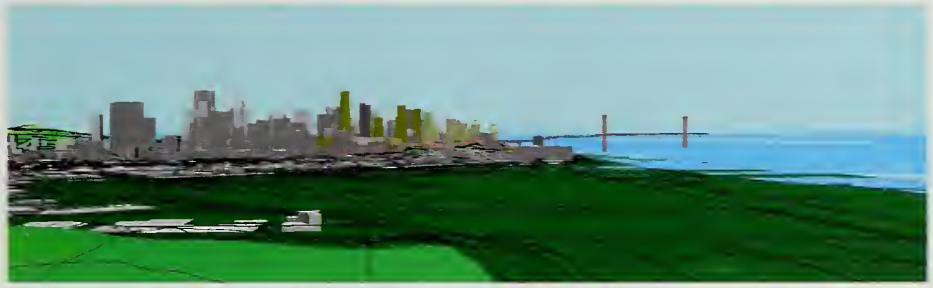
Preferred opton (Optimized heights with 20 percent tower coverage)

Skyline View: From Potrero Hill

This series of views from Potrero Hill shows the skyline as seen from the south. The base condition illustrates the strong form of the downtown 'mound.' The first three options show slightly tapering heights towards the bridge, continuing the downtown form, with differing degrees of permeability. The preferred option accentuates Rincon Hill, calling it out as a form separate from the downtown.

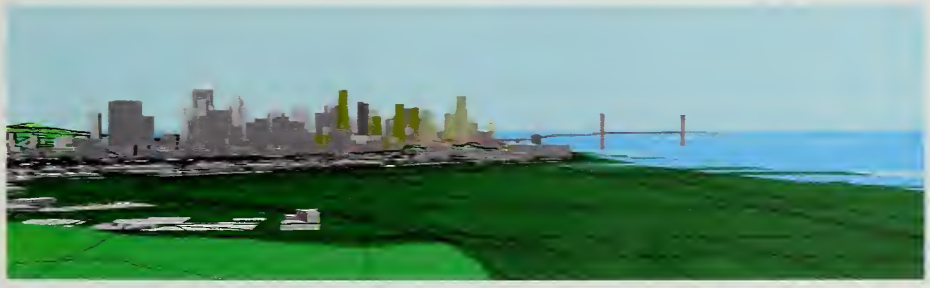
Base condition

82.5-foot tower separation/proposed projects



Maximum tower coverage of 20 percent (or 115-foot tower separation)

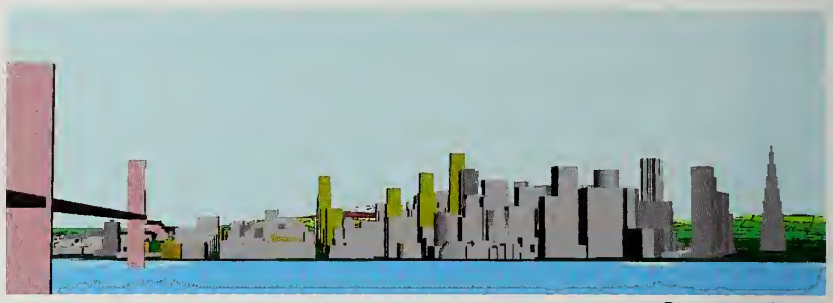
150-foot tower separation



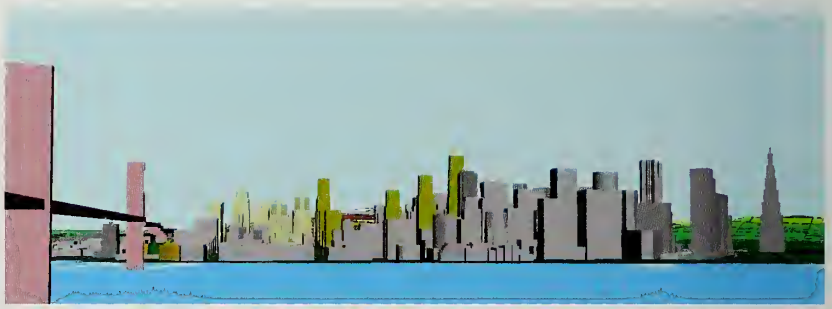
Preferred opton (Optimized heights with 20 percent tower coverage)

Skyline View: From Treasure Island

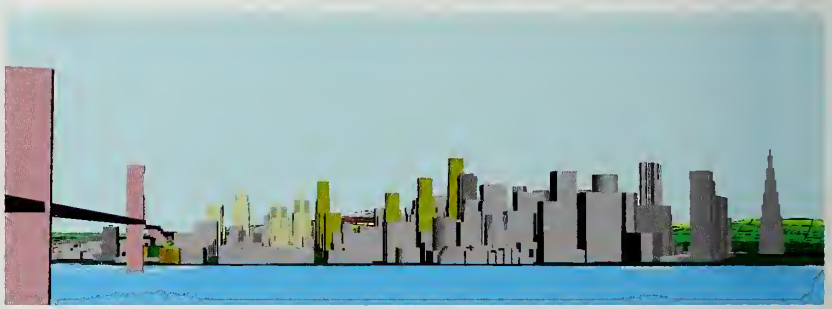
The view from Treasure Island is one of the most recognized and cherished views of San Francisco. This series shows the effects of new development in Rincon HIll on that view. The 82.5-foot option creates a flat line of buildings with little variation in height from the north end of downtown to the bridge. Subsequent options thin out this line in Rincon Hill. The preferred option raises heights at the top of the hill, creating a valley between downtown and Rincon Hill, and retaining each as a distinct form.



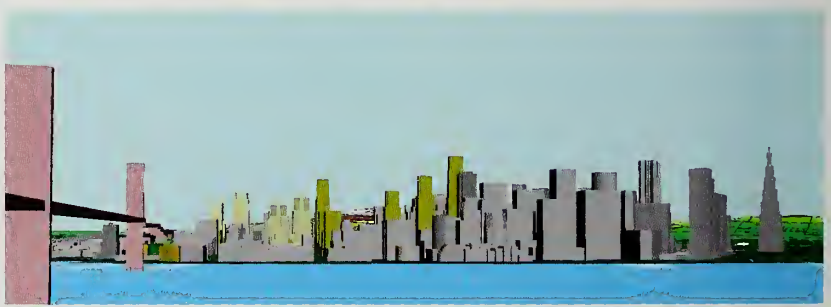
Base condition



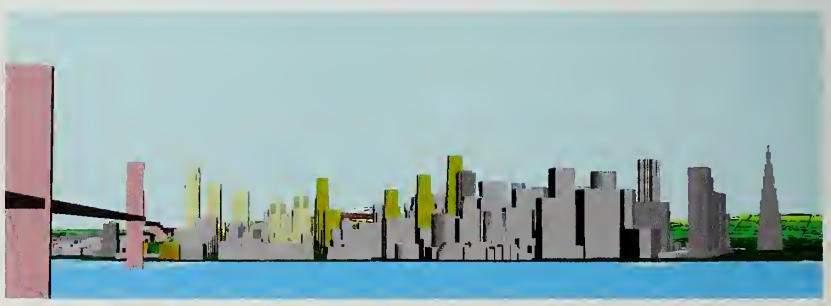
82.5-foot tower separation/proposed projects



Maximum tower coverage of 20 percent (or 115-foot tower separation)



150-foot tower separation



Preferred opton (Optimized heights with 20 percent tower coverage)

Street Perspective: Looking Up Fremont Toward Harrision

The street perspective gives a sense of the experience of a person walking through the district. This perspective is taken from Folsom Street, looking south (uphill) on Fremont Street, which is the block that would be most affected by these proposals. Although this view is very rough– buildings contain more facade variation and finish than is illustrated here– this view nonetheless well illustrates the effects of these proposals on sky access, sunlight, and views of the bridge from the street; note the greater amount of sky visible in the preferred option versus the 82.5-foot option.

Maximum tower coverage of 20 percent (or 115-foot tower separation)

Base condition

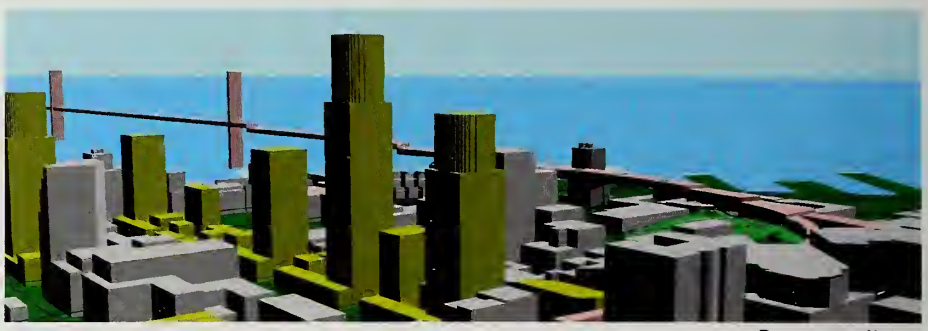
150-foot tower separation

82.5-foot tower separation/proposed projects

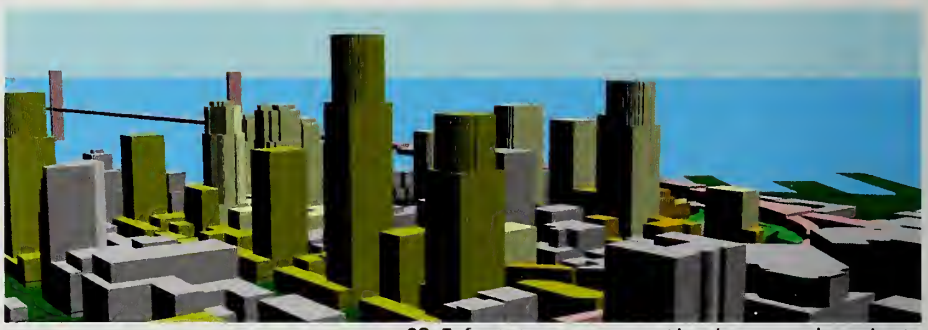
Preferred opton (Optimized heights with 20 percent tower coverage)

View from St. Regis Museum Tower

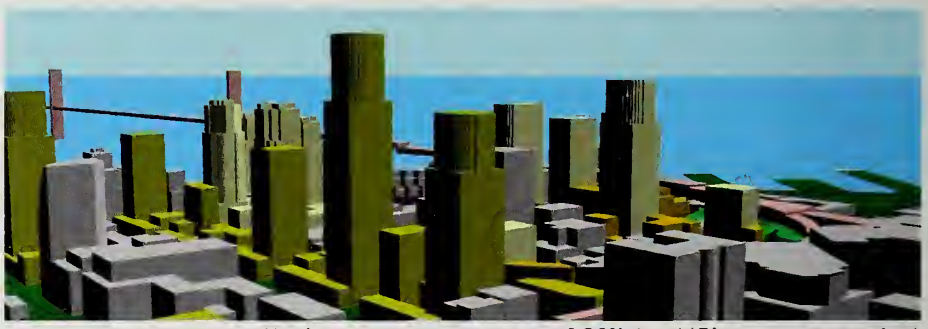
Another important view is the view of the bridge, the Bay and the East Bay Hills from downtown. This series shows the view from the top of the new St. Regis tower, which affords a view of Transbay (gold buildings in foreground), Rincon Hill, and the Bay Bridge. Again, the 115-foot and 150-foot options open up views through to the bridge and the Bay, and the preferred option accentuates heights on Rincon Hill.



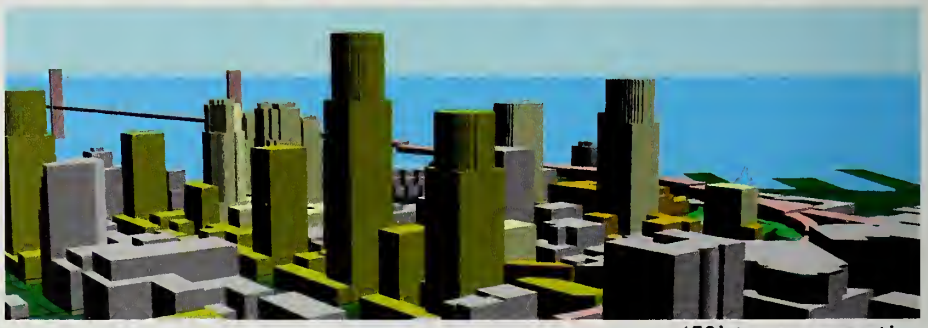
Base condition



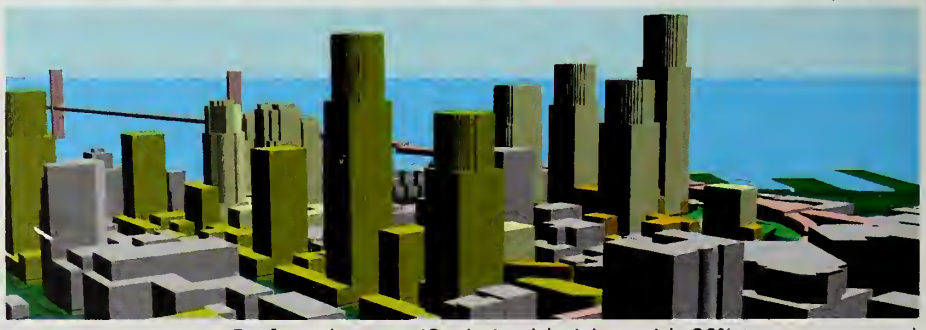
82.5-foot tower separation/proposed projects



Maximum tower coverage of 20% (or 115' tower separation)



150' tower separation



Preferred opton (Optimized heights with 20% tower coverage)

Residential Development Program

Each form option produces a different mix of unit types (tower units versus podium units) and provides a different character for the district. Fewer towers translate to more opportunities to create street-level townhouses that engage the street and create a more fine-grained neighborhood. Additionally, podium units are cheaper to build, and hence translate to potentially greater affordability within the district. This is a trade-off with absolute quantity of units, which is slightly greater under scenarios with more of an emphasis on towers. It is important to note though, that the difference in housing unit potential under the three densest scenarios is less than 10% (or less than 500 units of over 5000 units total) and every scenario offers more potential than current controls allow.

Tower Spacing	Podium		Tower		Total New Units	Total Units in Rincon Hill
	# of units	% of total units	# of units	% of total units		
Per Existing Controls (uses existing zoning for 201 Folsom and 300 Spear sites)						
150'	2827	84%	530	16%	**3357**	**4808**
Per Proposed Alternatives					*(includes 300 Spear and 201 Folsom)*	
Podium Only	1187	100%	0	0%	**2787**	**4238**
82.5' (no max. block coverage)	1304	48%	1437	52%	**4341**	**5792**
115' (same as 82.5' w/ max. 20% block coverage)	1232	54%	1035	46%	**3867**	**5318**
150'	1232	58%	892	42%	**3724**	**5175**
Preferred	1232	48%	1356	52%	**4188**	**5639**

300 Spear	800
201 Folsom	800
Under Construction (333-355 First)	345
Existing Rincon Hill Units	1106

Notes:

Tower units are defined as all units above 85' in height.

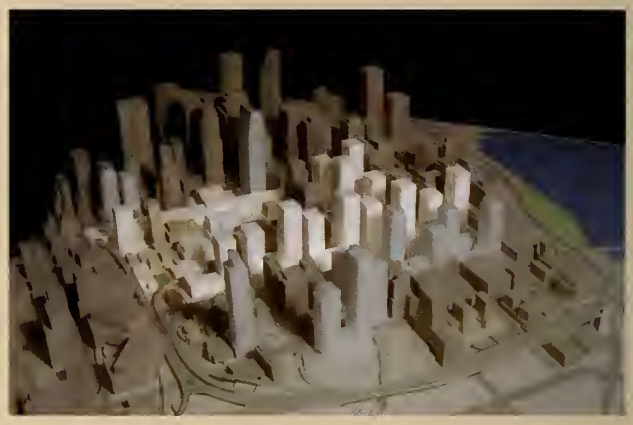
Podium units are defined as all units below 85' in height, even if they are part of a tower structure

Podium units for existing controls are all units below 105' in height

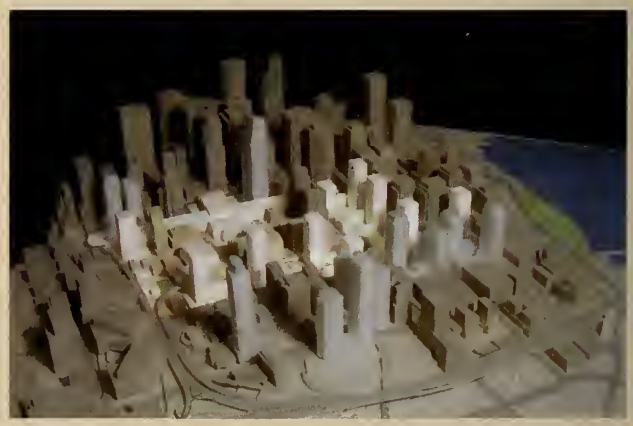
Creating a New High-Rise Residential District: Lessons from Transbay

During the Transbay Design for Development planning process, the Planning Department, Redevelopment Agency, consultant team, and Citizens Advisory Committee explored multiple development concepts to assess how urban form variations affected both the development potential of the Transbay area and the livability trade-offs, including sunlight to streets and parks, views and the skyline.

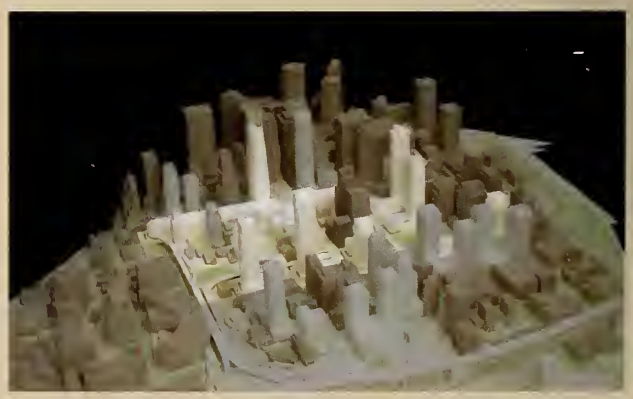
The fist form concept comprised a pattern of two 30- to 40-story towers per half-block in a checkerboard fashion, spaced at 80 feet apart, based on a development program for an EIR similar to that for Rincon Hill. This form produced the highest unit count (4,700), but was found to produce too much shadowing of public spaces, and blocked views to and from downtown and the waterfront.



The second concept reduced the number of towers to one per half-block and kept towers to no more than 300 feet tall. This form was better than the first in terms of sunlight, views, and sky exposure but would not produce sufficient density (2,400) for the required program.



The final concept reduced the tower count even slightly further, no more than one per half-block, but increased the heights of the towers to 30 to 55 stories. This option produced an appropriate density (3,200) and offered the greatest advantages in terms of sunlight, views, and sculpting a skyline that transitions from the downtown and to the waterfront. With a four to eight story podium base, this third option provided the best mix of townhouse, podium apartment, and tower apartment housing units.



Neighborhood Design

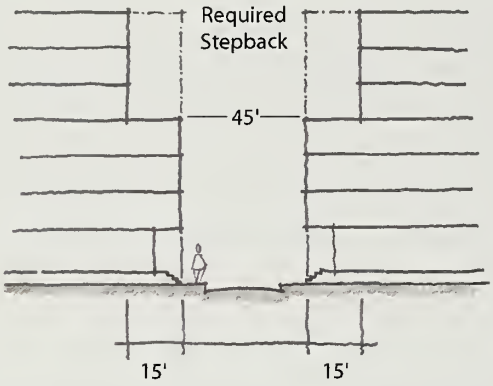
Aside from issues of sunlight and sky exposure related to towers, the experience of walking in the district will largely be defined by the way buildings meet the street and how they are articulated below the podium height of 85 feet. To create the most enriching pedestrian realm at a neighborhood scale, the following objectives should be met:

- Provide a consistent streetwall that defines the street as a useable, comfortable space.
- Create activity and visual interest along the ground-floor and sidewalk edge.
- Sculpt buildings to maintain an intimate scale related to width of the street and preserve sunlight and sky exposure in alleys and on important pedestrian streets.

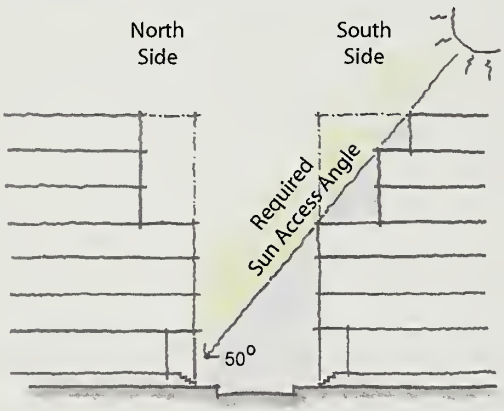
Podiums (below 85 feet):

The podium portion of new development will create the most immediate experience of a building for a pedestrian in Rincon Hill. The development concept for Rincon Hill will create a 65- to 85-foot streetwall, strongly defining the street space without overwhelming it. For podiums, the following requirements would apply:

- There would be a minimum average height of 50 feet on all street-facing property lines, except where required upper-story stepbacks and access to the sun and skyplane are called for on alleys and midblock pedestrian pathways, or in areas zoned for less than 85 feet.
- Below 85 feet, no bulk limits would apply, except where building mass is required to be setback to provide light to alleys.
- Where residential entries are required, a minimum building setback of 5 feet from the sidewalk would be required, not to exceed a depth of 10 feet. The setback space would be articulated according to guidelines for the incorporation of stoops, landscaping, and entryways outlined elsewhere in this document. An upper story setback of 15 feet would also be required above a height of 65 feet.

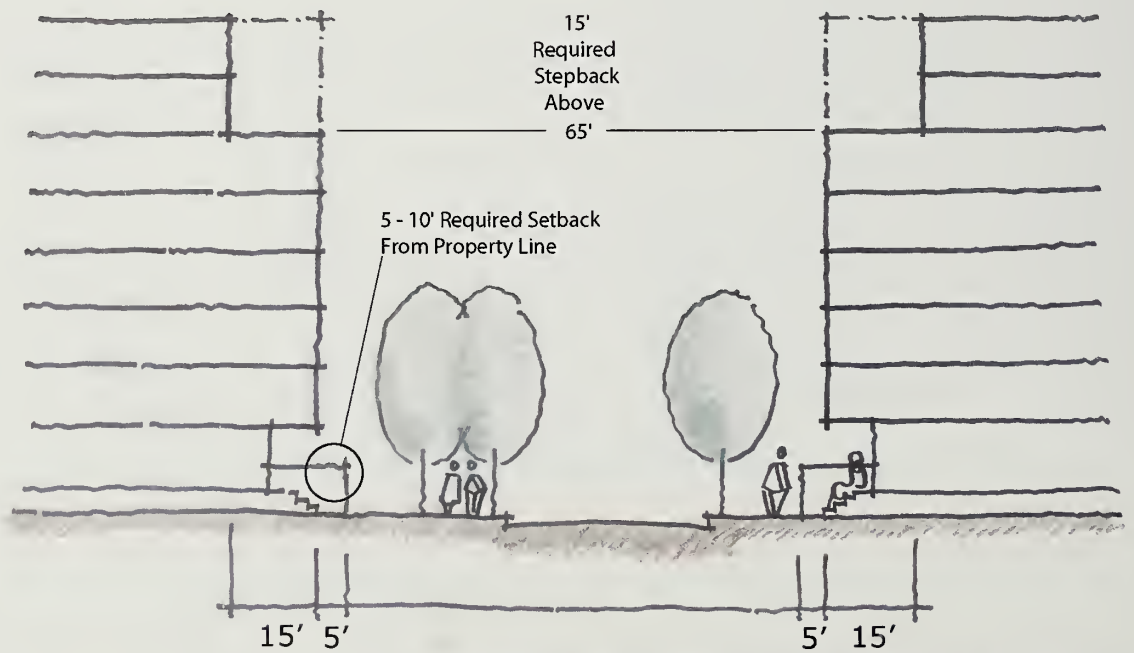


Upper Story Stepback on All Alleys and Midblock Pedestrian Pathways



Required Sun Access on East/West Alleys and Midblock Pedestrian Pathways

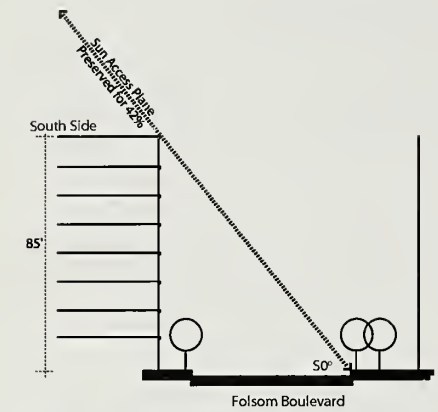
- To preserve sky exposure and an appropriate scale on alleys and midblock pedestrian paths, an upper story setback of 15 feet would be required above a height of 45 feet. Within 60 feet of an intersecting cross street, buildings may extend without stepbacks to the otherwise permitted podium height.
- To retain sun access to Guy and Lansing Streets and new east/west midblock pedestrian pathways, new buildings on the south side of these streets and pathways would be required to preserve a 50 degree angle, above 45 feet in height. Within 60 feet of an intersecting cross street, buildings may extend without stepbacks to the otherwise permitted podium height.
- Floor area devoted to towers is exempted from the setback and stepback requirements described above, but have other requirements related to sun access planes, described later.

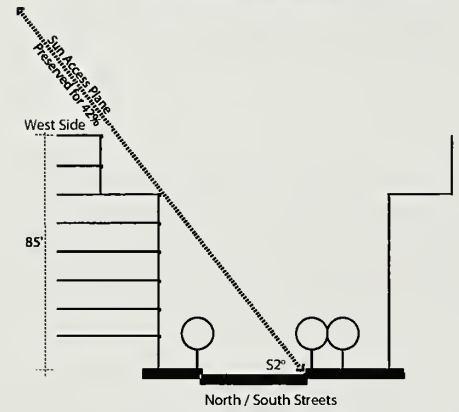


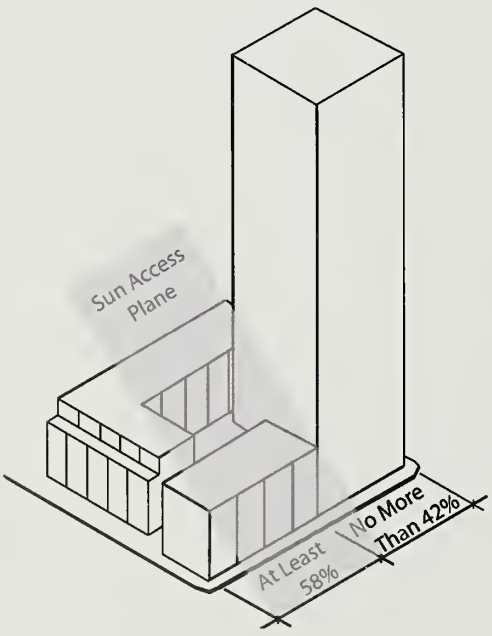
Required podiums setback on all north/south streets, except where towers are present

Guidelines for Massing and Articulation

- At or below a height of 85 feet, clearly define the sections of the building: base, midsection, and top, and provide a strong cornice to clearly articulate the public realm of the street.
- At or below a height of 85 feet, articulate the facades of buildings by dividing the facade into smaller vertical sections, and use elements such as bay windows and balconies to create a regular rhythm of projections and recesses.
- For towers, emphasize their verticality by carrying the tower's massing and articulation through the podium to the street. Avoid a disconnection between the midsection and the base of the building.
- Use a clean, simple palette of colors and materials to vary the façade and to break down the perceived massing of the building while retaining its overall integrity as a unified form. Colors and materials should reinforce the building's sense of slenderness, and be light to reinforce the visual unity and character of the city.
- Avoid unusual shapes that detract from the clarity of the urban form or compete for attention with buildings of greater significance.







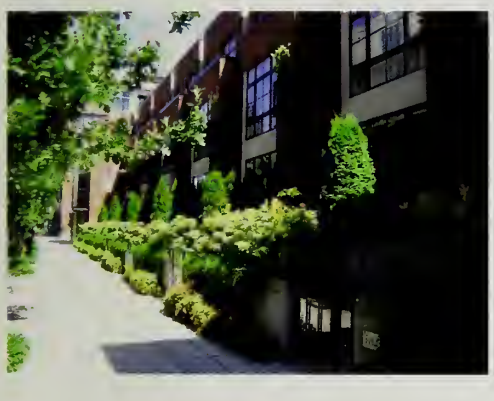
Sun and Wind on Public Rights-of-Way

To maintain direct sunlight on public sidewalks during critical periods of use, towers are required to meet the following sun access requirements:

- Along Folsom Street, buildings must preserve a 50-degree sun access plane to the right-of-way within 15 feet of the property line on the north side of Folsom Street for no less than 58 percent of a block's frontage. This permits one 115-foot-wide tower on a typical southern block face of 275 feet.
- Along the north/south streets, buildings must preserve a 52-degree sun access plane to the right-of-way within 25 feet of the property line on the east side of the street for no less than 58 percent of a block's frontage. This permits two 115-foot-wide towers on a typical western block face of 550 feet.
- Requirements for the reduction of ground-level wind currents currently called for in Sec. 249.1 (2) would be carried forward in the Rincon Hill DTR. To ensure a comfortable sidewalk environment in all cases, existing Zoning Administrator-granted exceptions permitting wind currents to exceed comfort levels up to the hazard level of 26 m.p.h. would be revised to allow currents to exceed the comfort levels of 7 m.p.h. (for seating areas) and 11 m.p.h. (for general sidewalks) by only up to 100 percent (up to 14 m.p.h. and 22 m.p.h. respectively).

Ground-Floor Treatments

Source: Vancouver Planning Department.

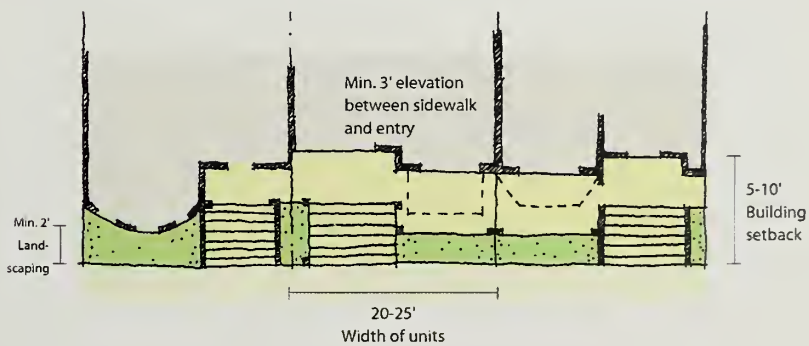


The development concept for Rincon Hill provides active uses on lower floors that will, by orienting uses and activities outward rather than inward, add life and activity to public spaces and allow residents and businesses to have a presence along the street. In combination with a streetscape plan that improves the quality of streets for pedestrian use, individual retail spaces will spill out onto Folsom Boulevard, much like other neighborhood commercial streets throughout the city. Townhouse units on lower floors will have their entries from the street, with stoops, landscaping and raised porches creating an inviting, usable transition from private spaces to the street.

- Pedestrian-oriented retail, residential, office and other community services are required ground-floor uses on all street-facing frontages, except for the minimum frontage required for fire doors, parking and loading, and utilities that require street-front locations.

- For frontages on Folsom Boulevard, ground-floor space suitable for retail use is required for no less than 60 percent of all frontages. Ground-floor retail space is also encouraged along Harrison, First, Fremont, Beale and Main Streets on corners and within towers where they come directly to the street. These ground-floor spaces would be required to be level with street grade, to have a minimum clear height of 15 feet from floor to ceiling, and to provide transparent fenestration for at least 60 percent of the ground floor frontage.

- For frontages along Fremont, First, Main, Spear and Steuart Streets, where individual ground-floor residential units are required, these units are required to be articulated at intervals of no more than 25 feet, except where a tower comes directly to street level and carries that dimension through the entire façade, within 50 feet of a corner, or where parking access and utilities are necessary.



- Ground-floor residential entries are required to be setback at least 5 feet from the property line, elevated at least 3 feet from street grade, and provided with stoops, recessed porches, landscaping and other treatments which mark a transition between public and private space. The first two feet of depth from the sidewalk must be landscaped at sidewalk level. These entries should be the primary access to townhouse units, with secondary access from interior corridors or lobbies if desired and as required to comply with ADA requirements.

Guidelines for the Ground Floor

- Retail and other pedestrian-oriented ground-floor uses should be expressed with façade treatments that are scaled to human activity on the street, provide ample transparency and maximize sunlight access to interior spaces.

- Retail spaces should be as tall and roomy as possible, with double-height spaces facing the street where possible, and a minimum clear ceiling height of 12 feet.

Building uses bays and other vertical elements features to express individual units at 20 - 25' intervals
Front door is recessed and architectural feature marks entry
Entry and porch raised above street grade; stoop provides access and semi-private space off the street
Landscaping strip and other plantings soften the street edge, buffer ground floor uses, and allows for gardening

- Ground-floor residential facades should be articulated at regular increments of 20 to 25 feet to differentiate individual residential units from the overall massing of the building and to express a rhythm of individual units along the street.

- Blank and blind walls at the ground floor are highly discouraged and should be minimized wherever possible. Frontages used for utilities, storage, refuse collection and other activities should be integrated into the overall articulation and fenestration of the façade.

The parking policies in this plan are designed to minimize the negative effect that parking can have on the pedestrian environment. Above-ground, unscreened parking (top) creates an unfriendly pedestrianscape, and detaches residences from the street. Parking that is hidden underground allows for an active ground floor and a graceful facade (bottom).

Parking and Loading

In accordance with the *City Charter*'s Transit-First Policy, the parking and loading requirements described below manage the siting and provision of parking to encourage travel by foot, bicycle and transit, while meeting the on-site parking needs of new development. Given Rincon Hill's adjacency to downtown and access to both transit and services, every effort is made to prioritize quality pedestrian spaces along sidewalks and active neighborhood shops and services.

By managing supply and access, the parking and loading requirements described below support the creation of an active, walkable, and affordable neighborhood in Rincon Hill that capitalizes on its proximity to downtown and to nearby transit. These controls minimize curb cuts and blank frontages on important pedestrian streets, encourage viable alternatives to driving, and ensure that above-ground space is used for housing and other neighborhood-serving uses, rather than for parking.

Off-Street Parking

- There would be no minimum off-street parking requirement for any use.
- All parking must be located below street grade. For sloping sites with a grade change of greater than ten feet, no less than 60% of the parking must be below grade. Any portions not below grade must be lined by active uses for a minimum depth of 25 feet.
- The project sponsor ensures that parking will be sold or rented separately from residential units and commercial spaces in perpetuity.
- The project sponsor ensures that parking will only serve those uses for which it is accessory in perpetuity, and under no circumstances will be sold, rented or otherwise made available as commuter parking.
- Parking is not permitted as a principal use.
- The number of accessory parking spaces permitted are as follows:

Residential uses:	1 space per 2 units
Office uses:	7% of gross leasable area
Retail uses:	None permitted for less than 5,000 sf.; up to 1 space per 1,500 sf of occupiable floor area above 5,000 sf.
All other uses:	Maximums equal to existing minimums.

- For residential uses, up to one parking space per unit would be permitted provided that the following conditions are met, in addition to those described above:

  - The project sponsor demonstrates that new driving trips generated by the additional parking will not adversely affect transit service (existing, funded, or planned) or pedestrian level-of-service in the immediate vicinity, or vehicle level-of-service on a Major Arterial in the Congestion Management Network as described in the Transportation Element of the *General Plan.*

  - The project sponsor demonstrates that travel demand generated by the project would not be more appropriately and efficiently accommodated through:

    + existing transit service or new services under con struction or funded in the Transportation Authority's 20-year Expenditure Plan;

    + carsharing or car-pooling arrangements; or

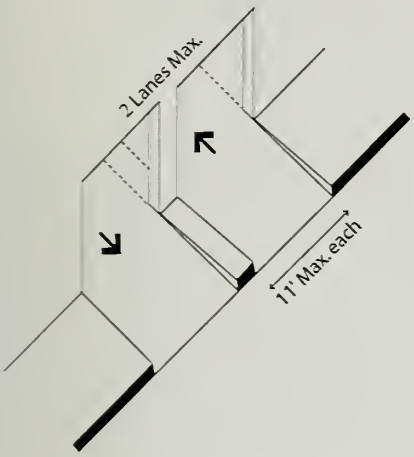
    + public parking supplied by the City and County of San Francisco within ½ mile, or new parking facilities under construction or funded in the Transportation Authority's 20-year Expenditure Plan or the city's Parking Authority.

- For projects with more than 100 units, the project sponsor ensures that at least 2 spaces, and no more than 5 spaces, are made available at no cost to car-sharing or site-based car rental programs. In the event that no car-sharing or site-based car rental organization is prepared to offer services to the project, the designated car-share or site-based care rental spaces may be rented on a short-term basis for residential use, unless and until such time as a rental organization wishes to provide the services. These spaces will not be counted toward the parking maximums.

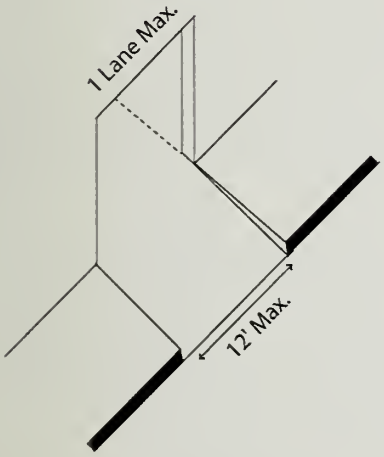
- Individual parking spaces would not be required to be independently accessible. Techniques that increase parking efficiency would be encouraged, including the use of valets and mechanical parking stackers.

- Individual parking spaces would not be required to meet the minimum dimensions described in Sec.154, and could not exceed a maximum of 180 sf, unless necessary to provide handicapped parking or parking efficiency designs such as mechanical parking stackers.

- For residential uses, a minimum of one secure bicycle parking space per 2 units is required either in common areas or as part of private storage facilities. For non-residential uses, the bicycle parking requirements of the Planning Code shall apply.



Parking Access



Loading Access

Off-street Loading

- There would be no minimum off-street loading requirement for any use.
- For buildings with less than 100 dwelling units, no off-street loading would be permitted.
- For buildings with 100 dwelling units or more, up to 1 loading space would be permitted for every 200 dwelling units.
- For buildings with more than 10,000 square feet of commercial space, 1 loading space would be permitted for every 100,000 square feet of commercial space.
- A aggregate maximum of 4 loading spaces may be provided for all uses for any one development.

Access to Off-Street Parking and Loading

- Parking access would be limited to a total of no more than one lane of ingress and one lane of egress per building, regardless of the total amount of parking proposed.
- Loading access would be limited to a total of no more than one lane for both ingress and egress per building, regardless of the total amount of loading proposed. Parking and loading should share access lanes, wherever possible, rather than requiring separate doors and driveways.
- Individual doors and driveways could not exceed a width of eleven feet per lane for auto parking, or twelve feet for loading or for joint parking and loading.
- Parking could not be accessed from Folsom Street for lots with frontage on another street. For lots fronting solely on Folsom Street, parking would be permitted by demonstrating that every effort has been made to minimize its negative impact on the pedestrian quality of the street.
- Parking access would be strongly discouraged on the following streets, listed in priority :

  Steuart Street and The Embarcadero (Transit Preferential Streets, as per the *General Plan*); Second Street (Neighborhood Pedestrian Street, as per the *General Plan*); Beale Street ("Second Level Street", as per the *Downtown Streetscape Plan*); Main Street.
- Sidewalk narrowings or porte cocheres would not be permitted from Beale, Folsom, First, Fremont, Main, and Spear Streets.

The Public Realm

Streets and Open Space in the Downtown Neighborhoods

Areas underserved by open space include Rincon Hill and other parts of SoMa

The current street environment, circulation system and open space network in the South of Market neighborhoods are unsuitable for residential neighborhoods. The street system contains overly large blocks (up to 825' by 550'), wide streets, one-way streets that dilute transit service and make local travel difficult, a street system designed for regional traffic, and poor pedestrian conditions. Many parts of South of Market are underserved by residentially-oriented open space, and lack easy pedestrian connections to existing open spaces.

The Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative will identify opportunities to humanize the street network and to create new, useable open spaces throughout the South of Market. Some strategies for improving the street system include identification of core transit streets (such as Folsom Street), instituting pedestrian improvements such as sidewalk widenings, mid-block crossings and narrowed intersections, and looking for opportunities to break down the scale of blocks by adding through-block passages.

Streets can also act as open space, by expanding sidewalks and incorporating open space amenities and landscaping. This idea is carried furthest with the Living Streets in Rincon Hill and elsewhere. These sidewalk open spaces can serve as linear linkages to larger neighborhood parks, such as those planned or proposed in Rincon Hill, Transbay, and other parts of SoMa.

This plan carries these ideas forward into Rincon Hill. It identifies Folsom Street as a major transit street, and Main, Beale and Spear Streets as Living Streets that provide useable open space. Other streets will also receive streetscaping treatment, connecting to a 3-acre neighborhood park at Harrison and Fremont streets and to parks proposed for Transbay.

Open Space

View from proposed park at Harrison and Fremont Streets

The following open space provisions would apply:

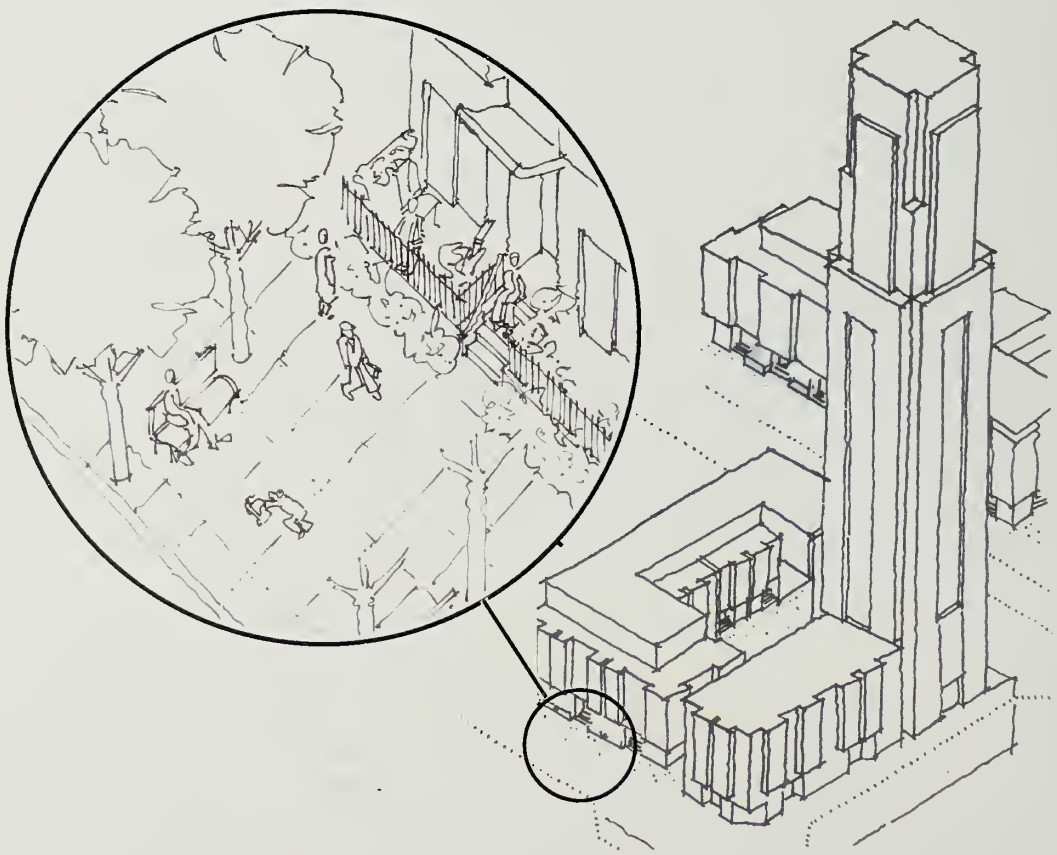
- Seventy-five square feet of usable open space would be required for every dwelling unit. At least 40 percent of this open space would be required to be common and publicly accessible at, or nearly at, street grade.
- One square foot of public open space would be required per 50 gross square feet of non-residential uses.
- The provision of publicly accessible open space off-site could be counted toward the open space requirements, provided they meet certain standards for sunlight access and relief from excessive wind.
- Open space funds collected as part of an assessment district, Mello Roos district, or other means (see Chapter 4: Implementation) will be directed to purchasing and improving as public open space those parcels indicated in the Rincon Hill Area Plan of the *General Plan.* These funds will be used for the acquisition and the creation of a public park on parcels 009, 010, 011, and 018 of Block 3766, currently owned by Caltrans at the foot of the Bay Bridge, and the implementation of the sidewalk treatments along Beale, Main, and Spear Streets, described in the next section.

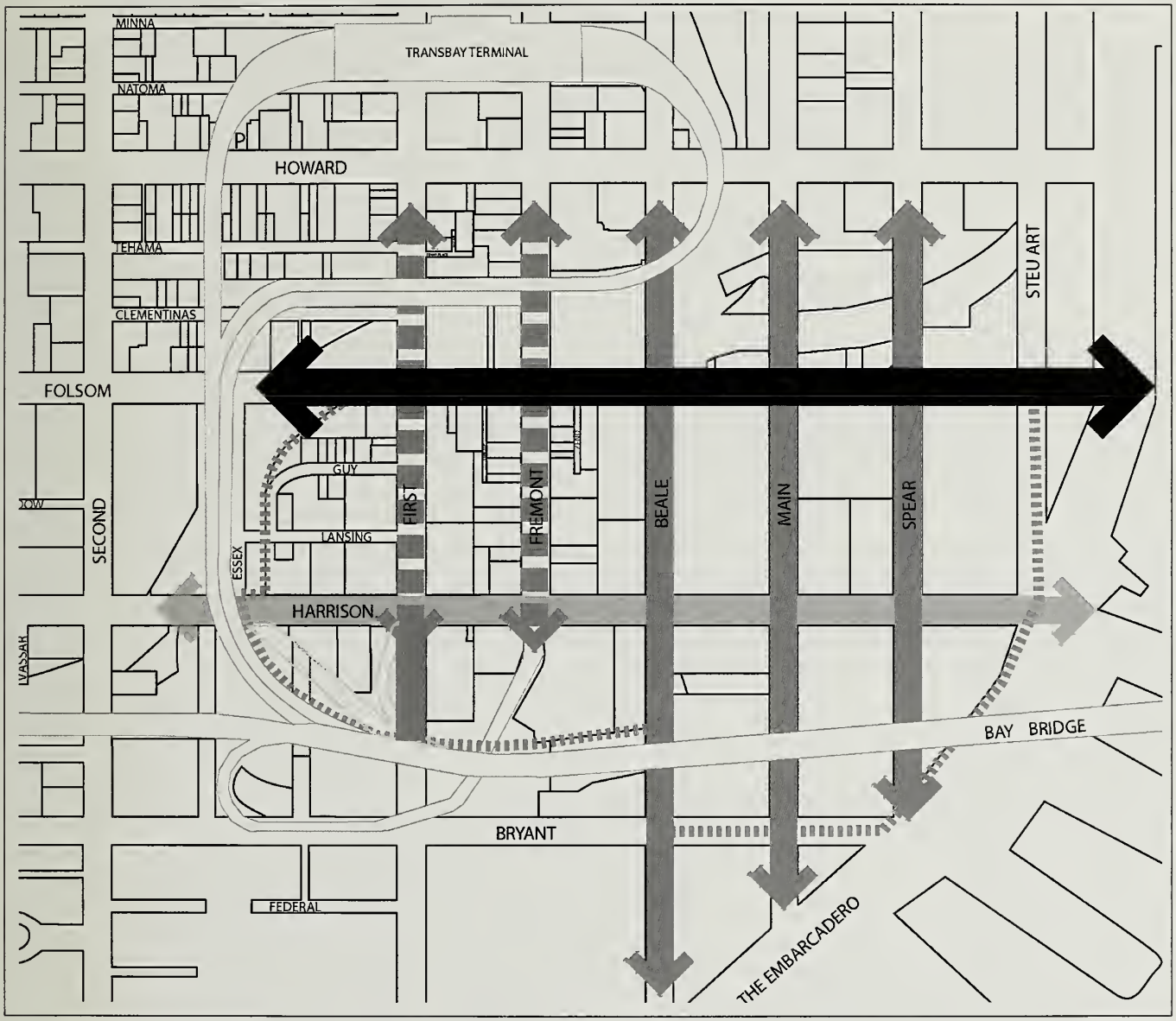
Rincon Hill open space plan

Streetscapes

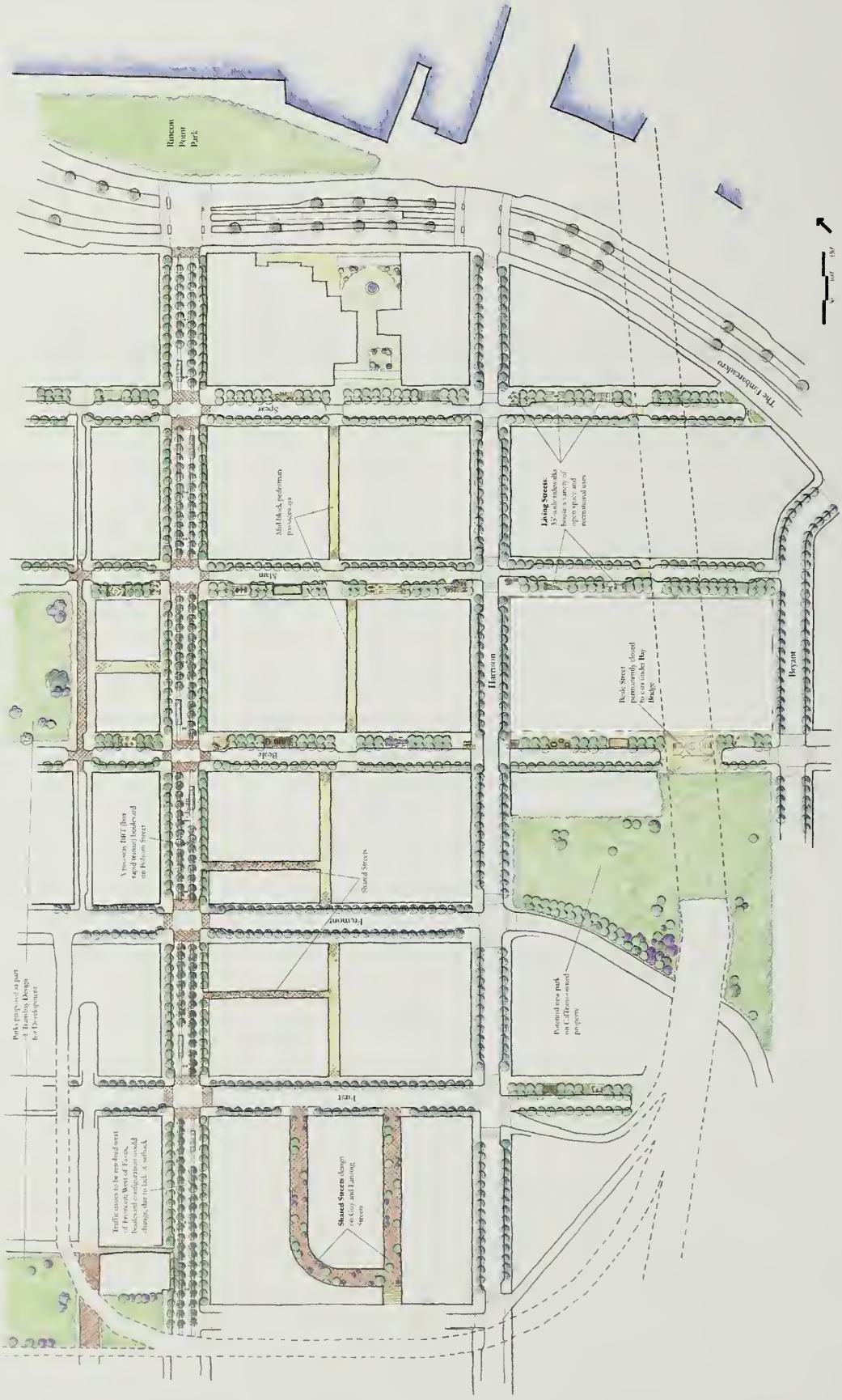
A comprehensive streetscape plan is proposed for Rincon Hill. This plan calls for extensive sidewalk widenings, tree plantings, street furniture and the creation of new public spaces along streets throughout the district. It is essential to create an inviting and vibrant public realm in Rincon Hill that meets the needs of a diverse range of new residents, including families with children. The streetscape plan was developed to support and encourage new development, especially ground floor uses and activities, to take full advantage of the public space that the street provides. New development will be required to implement portions of the streetscape plan as a condition of approval. Additionally, funds paid into some sort of neighborhood benefit district will enable the city to implement those portions of the streetscape plan not put in place by new projects, as well as to purchase the new public park described above.

The proposed streetscape plan will be refined, approved the the Municipal Transportation Authority and the Department of Public Works, and approved by the Planning Commission. New development in the area will be required to implement this plan, once adopted, or, if circumstances do not allow its implementation, be required to make equivalent cash payment into the neighborhood benefit district.





Rincon Hill streetscape concept



Rincon Hill
streetscape plan

Bus Rapid Transit

With the recent and future growth of SoMa as a group of substantial residential and employment neighborhoods, the Planning Department and Muni have identified Folsom Street as the best candidate for an east-west rapid transit corridor. Such trunk service on Folsom Street would likely take the form of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). BRT treatments might include dedicated transit lanes, signal priority, limited stops, special platforms, and other urban design treatments. Improved transit service will enhance pedestrian activity on Folsom Street, adding to its role as the "main street" of the Transbay and Rincon Hill neighborhoods.

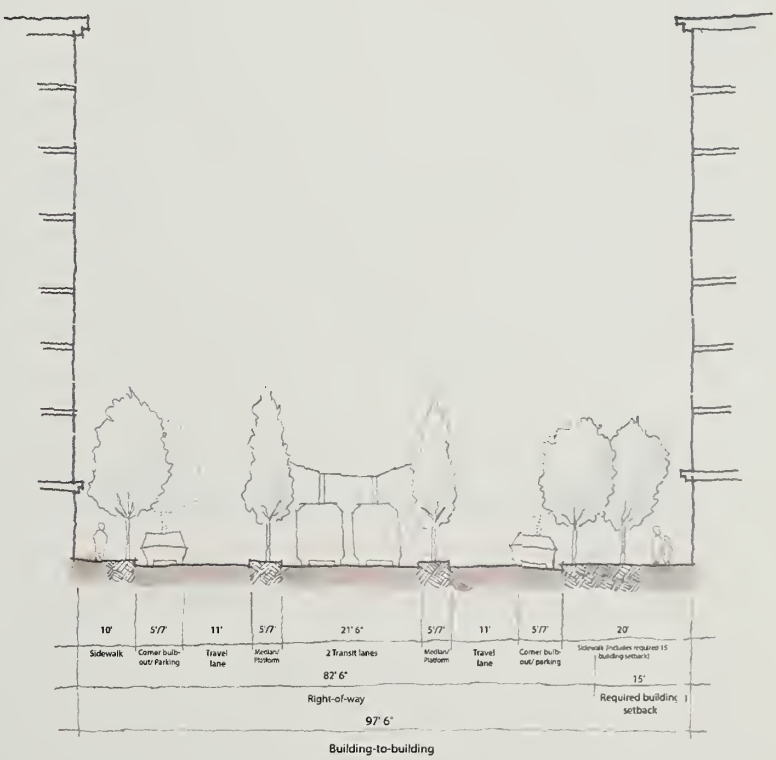
Turning Folsom Street into a rapid transit corridor needs further study. The changes necessary to implement BRT on Folsom Street will not be analyzed in the Rincon Hill EIR; thus, this proposal is not included in this plan. However, the potential is recognized for BRT on Folsom Street so as not to preclude such plans in the future.

Folsom Boulevard

Lined with neighborhood-serving retail, restaurants, and services, Folsom Street will be the commercial heart of the Transbay and Rincon Hill neighborhoods, and the civic and transportation spine linking the neighborhood to the rest of the South of Market and the waterfront.

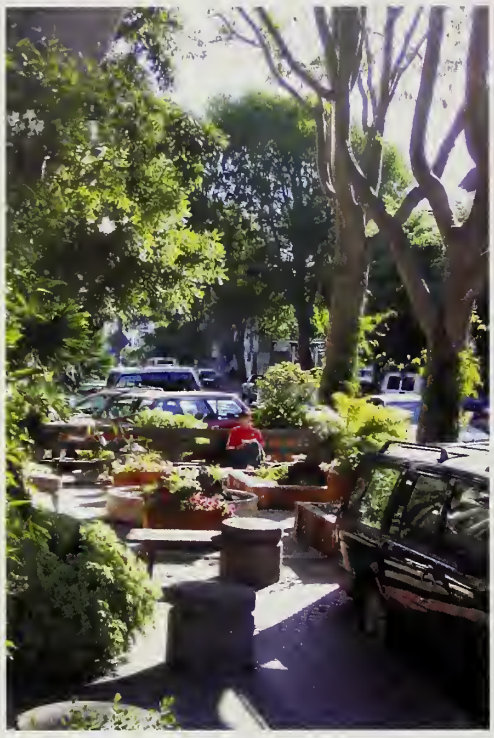
A leglislated fifteen-foot setback on the north side of the street (currently lined with vacant public parcels to be redeveloped as part of Transbay) enables Folsom Street to be redesigned as a grand civic street. The preferred design arising out of the Transbay planning process is a "half-boulevard," which includes sidewalk widening on the north (sunny) side of the street and a landscaped median separating an extended westbound travel lane from the eastbound lanes (reduced from four to three). The tree-lined median defines a human-scale zone on the north side and adds grandeur to the street. The street and parking area between the median and northern curb would be treated with texture and detailed surfaces as part of the pedestrian realm. This median configuration could, at a later date, be converted to a symmetric "whole" boulevard compatible with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT, see sidebar), by adding a second median mirroring the first.

The second Folsom Street alternative from Transbay proposes widening both sidewalks roughly equally to between 20 and 25 feet, without any medians.



This cross-section shows Folsom Street configured as a "full boulevard" with center dedicated Bus Rapid Transit lanes and a widened sidewalk on the north side.

Living Streets

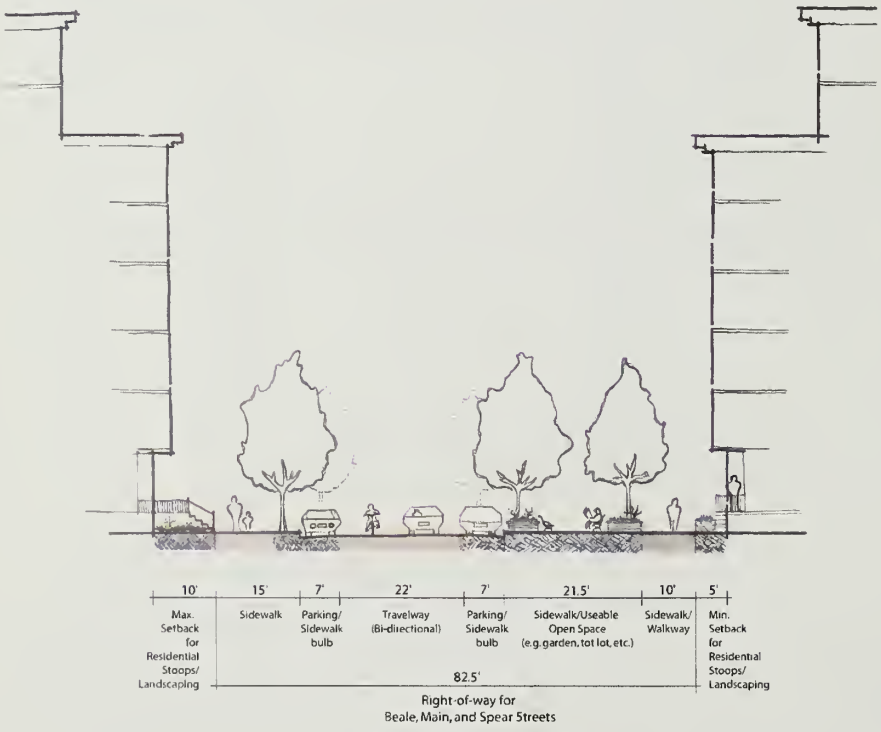


Living Streets prioritize streets for pedestrian activity and open space over auto needs. They provide a variety of open spaces, from semi-private porches and stoops to public sidewalks and pocket open spaces. Development presents an engaging face to streets, encouraging interaction between the public and private realms.

In Rincon Hill, Main, Beale and Spear Streets between Folsom and Bryant Street have been identified for conversion to Living Streets. These streets currently have excess traffic capacity and offer opportunities to significantly widen pedestrian space.

These streets will be composed of the following elements:

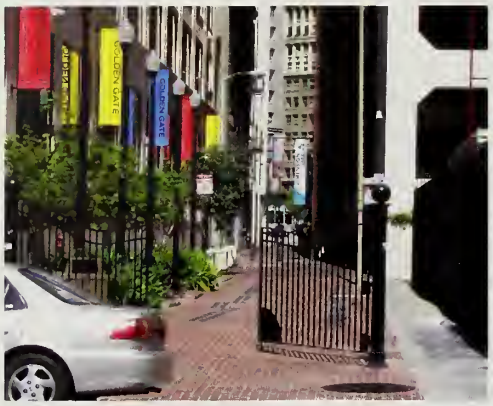
- **Curb-to-curb.** Space for auto traffic will be reduced to 36 feet, with 22 feet for bi-directional auto travel, and a parking lane on either side.
- **Sidewalks.** Sidewalks will be widened to 32 feet on one side, generally the east side of the street, to allow for pedestrian circulation, double rows of street trees and pocket open spaces. Open space types could include plazas, cafe seating, lawns, gardens, dog runs, bocci ball courts, play areas, or the like.



- **Front yard setbacks.** Building façades should be set back 5 to 10 feet from the property line to allow a transition zone of frequent entries, stoops, porches and landscaping in front of residential units. See Neigh borhood Design section for more detail on ground-floor treatments.
- **Street-facing uses.** The front rooms of private units also form part of the Living Streets composi tion. Publicly-oriented rooms such as living rooms or dining rooms should front on the street, with bay win dows, balconies or other articulations to facade interest.

Proposed street section for Main, Beale and Spear streets

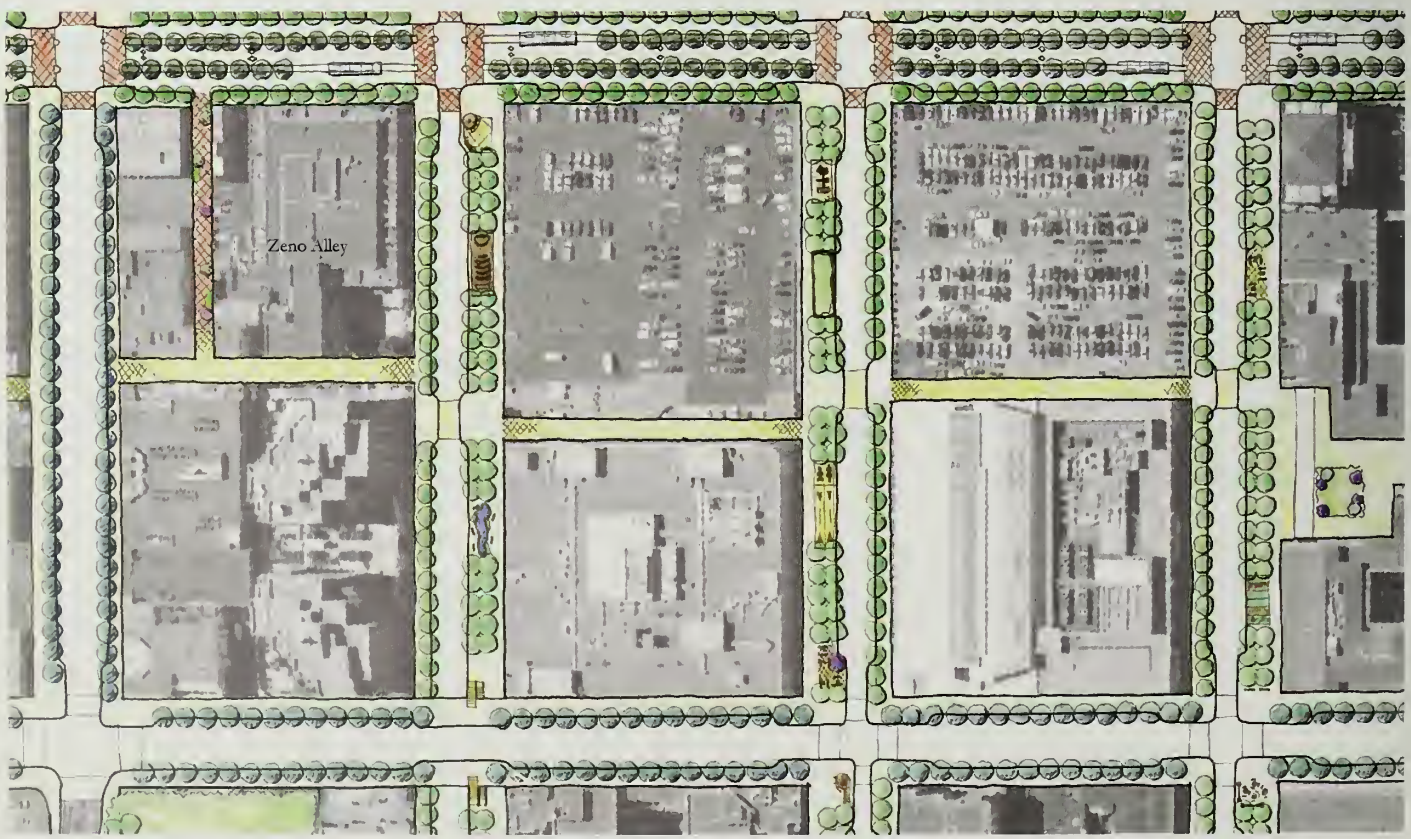
Detail plan of a living street. Extra-wide sidewalks can be used for a variety of activities, such as cafe seating or play areas; individual residential units front on the street.



Midblock Pedestrian Pathways

As part of any conditional use permit for new development on Assessor's Blocks 3744 - 3748, the Planning Commission may require midblock pedestrian pathways, as called for in the Rincon Hill Area Plan of the *General Plan*. Specific criteria will be established for the accessibility and design of these pathways, including a minimum clear width for pedestrian travel, adjacent uses, lighting, and that there be no changes in grade other than those necessitated by natural topography.

- There should be at least one east to west mid-block pedestrian pathway for each of Assessor's Blocks 3744-3748, 3767 and 3768.
- East to west pathways on Blocks 3747 and 3748 should either align with the south end of Grote and Zeno Alleys, or north to south alleys should be extended to meet new east to west pathways.
- New development on parcels that align with pre-existing pathways should continue that pathway through the block.



Some of the locations in Rincon Hill for mid-block pedestrian passages

Community Facilities

With the potential addition of up to 9,000 total dwelling units and as many as 20,000 new residents, the Rincon Hill and Transbay districts will generate a need for community facilities, including day care facilities, a community center, and a branch library. Funding for certain facilities, such as the community center and library, may be shared between the two areas, though the facility itself will be located in one neighborhood or the other. Policy 3.1 of the Community Facilities Element of the *General Plan* states, "Provide neighborhood centers in areas lacking adequate community facilities." Rincon Hill lacks these facilities within easy walking distance.

The need for community facilities is provided based on service standards for residential neighborhoods. A standard of 2.29 square feet per resident was used to determine the necessary size of the community center and branch library, following the standard used in Vancouver. Day care facilities needs are based on California child care requirements of 35 indoor square feet and 75 outdoor square feet per child.

This plan proposes the following community facilities for Rincon Hill:

- A community center. A 22,000 sf. community center is proposed for Transbay and Rincon Hill, to provide a venue for community meetings, informal gatherings, daycare facilities and performances. The facility may also provide office space for service providers and nonprofits. The costs of this facility would be split with the Transbay redevelopment project.

- A branch public library is proposed to serve residents of Transbay and Rincon Hill. The costs of this facility would be split with the Transbay redevelopment project.

Although Rincon Hill is within the service area of the Main Library and potentially the new branch library being provided in Mission Bay, neither of these is within easy walking distance. This plan holds that the influx of new residents to Rincon Hill and Transbay, potentially greater than the expected new population in Mission Bay, warrants a new branch library serving the area.

The exact locations of community facilities have not yet been determined. However, some options include: rehabilitating a historic structure into a community center, including publicly-accessible facilities, such as day care, on-site as part of a development project, locating facilities on a vacant or underutilized publicly-owned site, or locating facilities in space available for community use in the new Transbay Terminal.

Preservation

The existing Rincon Hill Plan contains the objective, "To preserve and adaptively reuse those buildings in the area which have particular architectural or historical merit or which provide a scale and character of development consistent with the plan." This plan retains this objective.

The plan continues:

> "The existing architecture of Rincon Hill is predominantly industrial in character, encompassing a wide spectrum of styles and building types. As was the case in manufacturing districts throughout the city, buildings were set on large lots with little regard for their neighbors. In the 1930s, the construction of the Bay Bridge and the later construction of the James Lick Freeway contributed to the further fracturing of the industrial area.
>
> Despite the apparent randomness of the existing streetscapes, several buildings command particular interest. The great facades with their large window expanses–the result of a need for ambient light–and innovative massing plans illustrate a series of developments in industrial architecture. From the calm severity of the Hathaway Warehouse, one of the oldest of such structures in San Francisco, to the bold polychromatic lines of the Union 76 (now Bank of America) Building, a wide variety of architecture is represented. While factories and warehouses originated as severely utilitarian buildings, those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show a more deliberate attempt at a stylistic treatment. In some cases, the facades are as formal as those of office buildings in their articulation through a strict order of piers and symmetrical compositions. The use of reinforced concrete structural systems also permitted greater freedom in the choice of cladding material as well as in the application of decorative detail.
>
> While most of the land within the Rincon Hill area is suitable for new development, there are a number of buildings which have been rated as Significant Buildings based on their architectural and historical attributes and their preservation should be encouraged."

Location of Significant Buildings identified by the Rincon HIll Plan

Significant Buildings to be preserved or adaptively reused that are identified in the existing Rincon Hill Plan include: 450 Harrison- Sailor's Union of the Pacific; 443-7 Folsom- Klockar's Blacksmith Shop; 2-30 Harrison- Hills Brothers Coffee Company; 29-35 Harrison- Joseph Magnin Warehouse; 400 Spear- Hathaway Warehouse; 425 First- Union Oil Building (the clock tower portion of which has subsequently been significantly altered); 301 Folsom- Coffin-Reddington Building; and 501 Folsom- Gimbel Brothers Candy Factory.

As stated earlier, this plan carries forward fully the historic preservation policies of the current Rincon Hill Area Plan, discourages demolition or significant alteration of historic structures, encourages sensitive reuse and rehabilitation, and extends an FAR/TDR program over the district to provide incentives for the preservation of identified historic resources.

IV Implementation

Fincancing the Costs of Creating a Full-Service Neighborhood

This chapter discusses the how the public capital improvements recommended in this plan can be realized. It introduces the idea of the developer contribution to neighborhood creation, and describes how the details will work in practice. Further information about the impacts and costs of the capital program can be found in the appendices.

Financing the Costs of Creating a Full-Service Neighborhood

A key goal of the plan is to create a full-service urban neighborhood to support the substantial new housing development anticipated in Rincon Hill. If the plan is realized, new residents will create significant new needs, which the area's dated infrastructure cannot meet. While new development will generate real estate transfer taxes and annual property tax increases and pay citywide school fees and meet inclusionary housing requirements, additional investments in parks, streets, and community facilities and services—beyond what can be provided through property tax revenue—is essential to meeting the needs of new residents and fulfilling the city's goal of creating a vibrant, residential neighborhood on Rincon Hill. To this end, the following investments in public facilities and services are proposed:

- *Rincon Hill Park.* The city's *General Plan* calls for the provision of at least one neighborhood park for every residential neighborhood in the city. It is possible to create a new four-acre park on existing Caltrans land on the block bounded by Harrison and Bryant, Beale and First Streets, as illustrated in the Streetscape and Open Space Concept, presented earlier in this plan. This park will offer dramatic views to the waterfront, the Bay, and to the ballpark, new facilities for active recreation as well as open grassy areas and a small plaza facing Harrison Street. This land could be made available to the city following completion of the Bay Bridge retrofit project in 2006.

- *Living Street Improvements.* Streets will be reconfigured in the district to provide ample space for pedestrian use and activity, per the Streetscape and Open Space Concept in this plan. These improvements would go well beyond standard streetscape improvements so that they provide meaningful neighborhood open space. Improvements include extensive sidewalk widenings, double rows of trees on widened walkways, corner plazas, outdoor seating and small open spaces along the sidewalk for active as well as passive recreation on Main, Beale and Spear Streets and portions of First Street. Minor sidewalk widening and new street trees will be provided on other streets in the district.

- *A Community Center.* A community center is proposed to serve both Transbay and Rincon Hill. This center would provide a venue for community meetings, informal gatherings, daycare facilities and performances. The facility may also provide office space for service providers and nonprofits, and potentially be developed jointly with library and educational facilities. Potential sites for a community center include the mezzanine level of the proposed Transbay Terminal, which will have approximately 200,000 square feet of non-transportation space available for a variety of uses (including retail and community uses), re-use of an existing historic building, or a portion of the proposed Rincon Hill Park. The costs of developing this facility will be shared proportionally with the Transbay redevelopment project area.

- *Library Facilities and Services.* Similar to existing fees that cover the provision of school services, special funding is necessary to enable the San Francisco Public Library to provide adequate service to this area, which is currently without library services. Based on the new population expected in the area, an additional new library facility will likely be needed. A potential location for such a facility is in the new Transbay Terminal. In addition to adequate facilities, additional funds are needed to ensure that the library's standards of service are met.

Based on an initial assessment, approximately 40 million dollars in capital funding will be needed to provide these facilities and services. To finance these costs, the Planning Department is exploring several funding mechanisms to leverage these improvements, in proportion to the need for new community services created by new development. Two approaches are being considered, both of which would require that either new development or future property owners contribute to the provision of these services. As this plan moves forward, these approaches will be carefully evaluated to determine their ability to secure adequate funding, and their potential impact on the feasibility of new development.

Option 1: Direct Developer Contributions. This option would require that a contribution of approximately $10.00 per net square foot of new residential development either be paid directly into a neighborhood benefit fund or provided in-kind through construction of street and other public improvements. This contribution would be in addition to existing required fees, and would be a required condition of approval. The existing downtown open space fee of $2.00 per net square foot of new commercial development would be extended to the area.

These fees would be used for capital expenditures for public improvements and facilities; future increases in property tax revenue and transfer taxes will be used to fund maintenance and operations of public facilities.

Option 2: A Mello-Roos Community Facilities District. In this option the city would create a Mello-Roos district to include all sites where new development is anticipated. As a condition of exercising the increased development rights made possible through the rezoning, property owners would agree to participate in the Mello-Roos district. The cost of providing the facilities and services described above would be passed on to individual condominium owners and amortized over a period of 20 to 30 years. These fees would be used for capital expenditures for public improvements and facilities; future increases in property tax revenue and transfer taxes would be used to fund maintenance and operations of public facilities.

In either case, the city could seek to bond against future revenues to construct the needed facilities ahead of or in parallel with new private development in the area. To this end, securing this funding mechanism is an indispensable part of the proposed rezoning of Rincon Hill.

Summary of Proposed Developer Contribution

Total unit potential under proposed rezoning (including 201 Folsom and 300 Spear)		4,188
Living Street Improvements	$	10,845,254
Basic Street Improvements	$	6,033,174
Woonerfs (Shared Auto/Ped Streets)	$	2,495,975
Rincon Hill Park	$	17,429,759
Community Center	$	6,819,183
Library	$	455,131
Gross Cost of Community Facility Improvements	**$**	**44,078,477**
Less Existing Requirements for Street Improvements	*$*	*2,316,567*
Net Cost of Community Facility Improvements	**$**	**41,761,910.15**
Cost/Unit	$	9,972
Cost/Square Foot (assuming 1,000sf.unit)	**$**	**9.97**

V Appendices

Existing and Proposed Planning Controls | Transit-First Policy | Impacts of New Development | New Facilities Costs | Planning Fees in California Cities

Appendix A: San Francisco City Charter, Sec. 16.102. Transit-First Policy

The following principles shall constitute the City and County's transit-first policy and shall be incorporated into the General Plan of the City and County. All officers, boards, commissions, and departments shall implement these principles in conducting the City and County's affairs:

1. To ensure quality of life and economic health in San Francisco, the primary objective of the transportation system must be the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
2. Public transit, including taxis and vanpools, is an economically and environmentally sound alternative to transportation by individual automobiles. Within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile.
3. Decisions regarding the use of limited public street and sidewalk space shall encourage the use of public rights of way by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and shall strive to reduce traffic and improve public health and safety.
4. Transit priority improvements, such as designated transit lanes and streets and improved signalization, shall be made to expedite the movement of public transit vehicles (including taxis and vanpools) and to improve pedestrian safety.
5. Pedestrian areas shall be enhanced wherever possible to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and to encourage travel by foot.
6. Bicycling shall be promoted by encouraging safe streets for riding, convenient access to transit, bicycle lanes, and secure bicycle parking.
7. Parking policies for areas well served by public transit shall be designed to encourage travel by public transit and alternative transportation.
8. New transportation investment should be allocated to meet the demand for public transit generated by new public and private commercial and residential developments.
9. The ability of the City and County to reduce traffic congestion depends on the adequacy of regional public transportation. The City and County shall promote the use of regional mass transit and the continued development of an integrated, reliable, regional public transportation system.
10. The City and County shall encourage innovative solutions to meet public transportation needs wherever possible and where the provision of such service will not adversely affect the service provided by the Municipal Railway. (Added November 1999)

Appendix B: Impact of New Development on Services and Infrastructure

Total New Units 4188
Total New Population 9423

Facility	Need/Resident	Units	SF of Improvement	Land Cost/sf*	Cost/SF of Improvement	Cost for Improvements	Cost for land	Total Cost
Community Center	2.29	SF	21579	51.45	400	$8,631,468	$1,110,223	**$ 9,741,691**
Library	$ 69	resident						**$ 650,187**
Open Space (park)	1	Ngbrhd Park (1 to 10 acres)	220468	25.00	$ 31.47	$6,938,128	$5,511,700	**$ 12,449,828**

Sources:
A: Need from Vancouver public amenity requirements
B: Need based on San Francisco Public Library service standards for neighborhood branch libraries
C: Rec OS element, General Plan
*Land Cost Assumptions based on Comparable Projects. Cost is halved for sale of State Land (Caltrans Parcel) to the City

Appendix C: New Facilities Costs

Improvement	Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Living Street Improvements	*Narrow side*				
(Main, Beale, Spear and First)	special streetscape (excl. paving and street trees)	2,150	lf	$ 336.00	$ 722,400
	concrete paving	34,400	sf	$ 20.00	$ 688,000
	existing 15' sidewalks	18,375	sf	$ (20.00)	$ (367,500)
	Street Trees	2,150	lf/20	$ 850.00	$ 91,375
	minus trees where they exist	800	lf/20	$ (850.00)	$ (34,000)
	bulb-outs (one-side)	11	each	$ 10,700.00	$ 117,700
	linear foot cost	537	lf		
	Wide Side				
	special streetscape (excl. paving and street trees)	2,160	lf	$ 336.00	$ 725,760
	concrete paving	68,040	sf	$ 20.00	$ 1,360,800
	first row of trees	1,830	lf/20	$ 850.00	$ 77,775
	second row of trees	1,830	lf/20	$ 850.00	$ 77,775
	minus trees where they exist	550	lf/20	$ (850.00)	$ (23,375)
	bulb-outs (one side)	7	each	$ 10,700.00	$ 74,900
	linear foot cost	1,917	lf		
	Street				
	Re-pave	124,250	sf	$ 20.00	$ 2,485,000
	Re-grade/drainage	7	block	$ 250,000.00	$ 1,750,000
	linear foot cost	475	lf		
	40% soft costs and contingency				$ 3,098,644.00
	Sub-total				**$ 10,845,254**
Basic Street Improvements	typ streetscape (excl. paving)	3,660	lf	$ 378.50	$ 1,385,310
First, Fremont)	concrete paving	131,760	sf	$ 20.00	$ 2,635,200
	bulb-outs (one side)	27	each	$ 10,700.00	$ 288,900
	linear foot cost	734			
	40% soft costs and contingency				$ 1,723,764
	Sub-total				**$ 6,033,174**

Appendix C: New Facilities Costs (continued)

Woonerf	paving and soil	36,065	sf	$ 33.30	$ 1,200,965
(Guy, Lansing, Grote, Zeno)	streetscaping and tree plantings	1,250	lf	$ 465.50	$ 581,875
	40% soft costs and contingency				$ 713,136
	Sub-total				**$ 2,495,975**
Rincon Hill Park	Improvements	220,468	sf	$ 31.47	$ 6,938,128
(includes lawn, irrigation, benches,	Land			$ 25.00	$ 5,511,700
tables, shrubs, trees, brick paving,					
soil and pedestrian lighting)	40% soft costs and contingency				$ 4,979,931
	Sub-total				**$ 17,429,759**
Community Facilities	Community Center	21,579	sf	$ 400.00	$ 8,631,468
	Land	0	sf	$ 51.45	$ 1,110,223
	Split with Transbay				$ 4,870,845
	Library	0	sf	$ -	$ 650,187
	Land		sf	$ -	$ -
	Split with Transbay				$ 325,094
	40% soft costs and contingency				$ 2,078,376
	Sub-total				**$ 7,274,314**
Total					**$ 44,078,477**

Appendix D: Planning and Impact Fees in California Cities

45-Unit Model	San Francisco	Oakland	Berkeley	Los Angeles	San Diego	Tracy
	Fee/Unit	*Fee/Unit*	*Fee/Unit*	*Fee/Unit*	*Fee/Unit*	*Fee/Unit*
Planning						
Subtotal	***3,000***	***3,497***	***3,945***	***1,825***	***1,532***	***3,542***
Utilities						
Subtotal	***512***	***3,868***	***5,040***	***2,106***	***9,229***	***1,678***
Neighborhood Services						
Subtotal	***1,720***	***2,130***	***-***	***2,430***	***3,445***	***7,103***
June 2003 Median Home Price	***576,500***	***337,500***	***598,500***	***284,318***	***390,000***	***330,546***
Total Fees/Unit	5,232	9,495	8,985	6,362	14,206	12,323
Total Fees/Square	**5.23**	**9.49**	**8.98**	**6.36**	**14.21**	**12.32**
Fee-Price Ratio	0.9%	2.8%	1.5%	2.2%	3.6%	3.7%
SF Fees/SF at ratio of other cities	**5.23**	**16.22**	**8.65**	**12.90**	**21.00**	**21.49**
Total Impact	2,232	5,998	5,040	4,536	12,674	8,781
Total Impact	**2.23**	**6.00**	**5.04**	**4.54**	**12.67**	**8.78**
Fee-Price Ratio	0.4%	1.8%	0.8%	1.6%	3.2%	2.7%
SF Impact Fees/SF at ratio of other cities	**2.23**	**10.25**	**4.85**	**9.20**	**18.73**	**15.31**
Neighborhood Services	1,720	2,130	-	2,430	3,445	7,103
Neighborhood	**1.72**	**2.13**	**-**	**2.43**	**3.45**	**7.10**
Fee-Price Ratio	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%	2.1%
SF NS Fees/SF at ratio of other cities	**1.72**	**3.64**	**-**	**4.93**	**5.09**	**12.39**

Assumes 1,000 SF per

Where fees are given per square feet, they have been converted to units by multiplying square-foot costs by 1,0(

Bedroom tax assumes 2 bedrooms per unit; for Los Angeles, is a dwelling unit fee (not per bedroom)

Fee info: California Department of Housing and Community Development (see http://www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/pay2play/pay_to_play.html)

Median home price: California Association of Realtors, http://www.car.org/index.php?id=MzIyNTA=, and DataQuick Information Services, http://www.dqnews.com/ZIPSFC.shtm

Acknowledgements

Mayor

Willie L. Brown, Jr.

Board of Supervisors

Matt Gonzalez, President
Tom Ammiano
Chris Daly
Bevan Dufty
Tony Hall
Fiona Ma
Sophie Maxwell
Jake McGoldrick
Gavin Newsom
Aaron Peskin
Gerardo Sandoval

Planning Commission

Shelley Bradford Bell, President
Michael Antonini
Rev. Edgar E. Boyd
Lisa M. Feldstein
Kevin Hughes
Sue Lee
William L. Lee

San Francisco Planning Department

Gerald G. Green, Planning Director
Lawrence B. Badiner, Acting Director
Amit K. Ghosh, Chief of Comprehensive Planning
David Alumbaugh, Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative Program Manager
Marshall Foster, Lead Planner, Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative
Joshua Switzky
Adam Varat
Sam Assefa

Contacts

For Information and Comments on the Planning Department's
Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative
or Rincon Hill Planning:

David Alumbaugh, Program Manager
415.558.6601
david.alumbaugh@sfgov.org

Visit the Downtown Neighborhoods Initiative Website at:
http://www.sfgov.org/planning/citywide/dni.htm